An analysis of age discrimination in employment.

Oswick, Clifford

AN ANALYSIS OF AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

by

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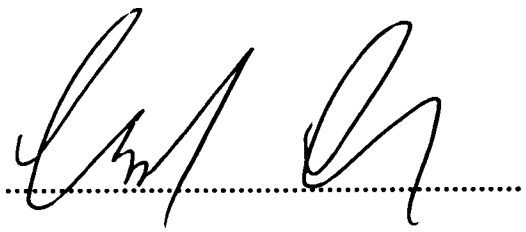
CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis, that the original work is my own except as specified in acknowledgements or in footnotes, and that neither this thesis nor the original work contained herein has been submitted to this or any other institution for a higher degree.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a longitudinal and attitudinal study of the nature and prevalence of age discrimination in employment. In particular, it considers: the magnitude and continuity of ageism; the reasons offered in support of age preferences; the nature and impact of age stereotypes; the role and status of stakeholders; and, the scope for anti-ageist measures.

An attitudinal questionnaire (n=248) was used with two cohorts of recruiters (i.e. 1990 and 1995). A further questionnaire regarding corrective measures was administered to a matched sample of personnel/HRM practitioners (n=48) and managers (n=49). And, a content analysis of job advertisements (n=21,085) placed between 1961 and 1993 was also undertaken. The data generated were analysed discursively and statistically (i.e. chi-square, ANOVA, regression and factor analysis).

There are five major findings. First, the longitudinal analysis of job advertisements provides evidence of an exponential decay in the use of age limits and the ANOVA results for the 1990 and 1995 cohorts reveal a statistically significant decline in ageist attitudes over time. Second, respondents consistently favoured 'job-specific reasons' (e.g. technical constraints, job content factors) as more acceptable reasons for age preferences than 'organisationally-generic' ones (e.g. age balance, company policy). Third, the 'factor analysis' of age stereotypes isolated a 'pro-older workers' factor based on stability, maturity and experience and an 'anti-older workers' factor concerned with physical deterioration. Fourth, gender, occupation and industrial sector were found to have the most significant bearing on the propensity to discriminate on the grounds of age. Fifth, although the majority of employers supported anti-ageist action, opinions regarding the potential effectiveness of voluntary and regulatory measures were sharply divided.

A job contingent theory of ageism, based upon the 'lack of fit' model (Heilman, 1983), is developed to explain employers' attitudes and behaviour towards older and younger workers. Finally, a model developed within the field of organisational change (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) is used to present an alternative conceptualisation of the measures available for tackling ageism.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 The Research Project

Until recently, age discrimination has tended to be somewhat overshadowed by other forms of work-based prejudice. Discriminatory practices which pertain to race, gender and disability are generally considered to be far less acceptable. Legislation which prohibits racist and sexist behaviour has been in existence for almost two decades (The Race Relations Act 1976 and The Sex Discrimination Act 1975). By contrast employers are at liberty to discriminate against existing and prospective employees on the grounds of age.

In comparison to the aforementioned forms of discrimination ageism has received a relatively limited amount of academic attention. There are clearly some very important academic studies which contribute to furthering our understanding of age bias and it's enactment. However, the primary mechanisms used to highlight the existence of age discrimination have tended to be journalistic rather than academic; characterised by a strong reliance upon first hand personal accounts and anecdotal evidence.

This research project examines some aspects of the nature and prevalence of age discrimination in employment in the UK. In doing so it attempts to quantify the problem and extrapolate trends and patterns regarding ageism. It also seeks to establish and analyse the

need for, and potential effectiveness of, corrective measures such as: legislation, codes of practice, and re-education initiatives.

At the outset it is important to state that the purpose of this project is not to concentrate upon assessing the accuracy and therefore legitimacy of age stereotypes. It does not attempt to quantify physiological capacities (e.g., strength or stamina) or psychological attributes (e.g., motivation, resistance to change or propensity to take risks) of either older or younger workers. The inappropriateness of this approach is that to advocate age preferences based upon the characteristics of an age cohort requires an unacceptable leap from the general to the specific. This problem of conflating levels of generalisability can be demonstrated by using an example based upon the sensory faculty of eyesight. Medical evidence has shown that eyesight generally deteriorates as people become older; a view endorsed by practising opticians. This might suggest that, if an occupation requires good eyesight, only younger people should be encouraged to apply. Clearly, this is inappropriate for some older people maintain excellent eyesight. Whilst, others, both old and young have always suffered from poor eyesight. The potential employer would make a far more informed appointment if (s)he initially screened candidates by using an eyesight test, rather than using the far cruder approach of simply excluding applicants according to their age. Similarly, if a job involves heavy physical labour then simple tests of ability and aptitude should be enlisted.

1.2 Explanation of Terms and Parameters

A substantial proportion of gerontological literature which considers ageism fails to distinguish between 'age prejudice' and 'age discrimination'. This etymological problem also seems to arise in the more general literature on discrimination (i.e. pertaining to gender and race). In his highly influential work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport argues that prejudice is:

> .....an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group. (1954: 10)

This definition is rather broad and vague; it could equally be applied to 'discrimination' as 'prejudice'. So are these terms interchangeable? Arguably, not. The problem with Allport's definition is the assertion that prejudice "may be felt or expressed". In this work a clear distinction is made between the attitudinal (the 'felt') and the behavioural (the 'expressed' or what might more accurately be termed the 'enacted'). Here, age prejudice is defined as a favourable or unfavourable predisposition and/or attitude towards a particular age group (or groups). Contrastingly, age discrimination (also frequently referred to as ageism) is behavioural rather than attitudinal. Age discrimination can therefore be regarded as a behavioural outcome of age prejudice (Jones, 1972) and according to the classical work on discrimination - such as Blumer (1958) and Raab and Lipset (1959) - it is this behavioural manifestation of prejudice that creates the social problem . In addition to being the purposeful enactment of age prejudice, ageism can result from the

operationalisation of policies, procedures or other actions which either indirectly or unintentionally disadvantage a particular age group. This latter form of discrimination can also be described as 'institutionalised ageism' (Bytheway, 1995).

The decision to classify an individual as either an older or younger worker is a fairly arbitrary one. Nevertheless it is important to distinguish between these categories and to specify some age guidelines which can provide a platform for undertaking meaningful research. A synthesis of the groupings provided by past writers has enabled some parameters to be developed (see section 2.3.3. for further details). In this thesis, employees referred to as older workers are between 45 and 65 years of age. Younger workers are located in the 16 to 35 age band.

This research project explores age discrimination in employment by incorporating an analysis of recruitment, selection and promotion practices as the focal areas of investigation. The significance of age as an intervening variable is also examined in relation to two other areas of personnel-related decision making, namely: training and development opportunities and retention issues (i.e. redeployment, retirement and redundancy).

1.3 Research Objectives

The specific hypotheses under test in this thesis are explained and discussed in Chapter 3. It may nevertheless be helpful at this

juncture to briefly outline the main objectives of the research project. They can be summarised as:

1. To establish the degree of age prejudice and draw inferences regarding the prevalence of discrimination by employers on the grounds of age.

2. To establish the nature of age stereotypes in employment and investigate their impact upon the enactment of age discrimination.

3. To identify and examine the major reasons offered by employers in support of the use of age as a factor in making employment decisions.

4. To determine and analyse the strategies and methods adopted by employing organisations as the means of expressing and enacting age preferences.

5. To analyse the extent to which particular patterns of ageism can be linked to other organisational variables (e.g., industrial sector, occupational grouping, age, or gender).

6. To highlight, and review the potential effectiveness of, the various measures available to combat ageism.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 2 presents an extensive review of the extant literature on age discrimination in employment. The literature review incorporates past research on the prevalence, nature and legitimacy of ageism.

Chapter 3 outlines and justifies the hypotheses about age discrimination developed on the basis of the survey of literature. The twenty hypotheses to be tested are contained within four broad categories which cover: the existence/prevalence of age discrimination; the nature of age stereotypes; reasons for age preferences; and, attitudes towards corrective measures.

Aspects of the general methodological approach, and details of the specific research methods employed, are provided in Chapter 4. More specifically, this chapter seeks to offer a series of systematic and coherent explanations for the decisions taken about data gathering and data analysis.

The presentation and discussion of results is undertaken in chapters 5 to 9. Each deals with a particular facet of age discrimination. Chapter 5 considers the prevalence and persistence of ageism. Chapter 6 explores the range and impact of age stereotypes associated with older and younger workers. Chapter 7 examines the composition of disadvantaged age groups and identifies the general demographic characteristics and discriminatory tendencies of employers. Chapter 8 analyses the significance of, and patterns of association between, the various reasons offered by employers in

support of the use of age preferences when making employment-related decisions. Chapter 9 assesses attitudes towards the formation and introduction of a repertoire of possible voluntary and compulsory measures for tackling age discrimination in the workplace.

The concluding chapter, chapter 10, seeks to integrate the issues covered in the main body of this thesis and analyse the major overarching outcomes of the research. It also highlights the limitations of the present study and the scope for further enquiry by outlining several possible avenues for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to highlight and examine past research on age discrimination in employment and to identify major issues, themes and trends. An extensive literature review was carried out at the commencement of the project, and further subsequent searches were undertaken at regular intervals to ensure that recent research was also incorporated.

The literature search was carried out using the standard methodology of cross-referencing and the use of abstracts. Particularly important abstract sources were Anbar, the Research Index and the abstract and bibliography service provided by the Institute of Personnel and Development (formerly the IPM). Other fruitful sources of information and data were: the Age Concern Institute of Gerontology, the British Society of Gerontology's Directory of Research, and the Library of the Centre for Policy on Ageing.

2.2 An Overview

Age discrimination in employment has generally received less attention than other forms of workplace prejudice, i.e. disability, racism and sexism. However, the advent of what has been described as the 'demographic timebomb' (Johnson, 1990) raised the profile of

age discrimination as an issue and has fuelled the general level of media interest.

The national press have printed numerous articles commenting upon both the existence and the unfairness of age discrimination. These sources have provided anecdotal evidence of age related discriminatory practice (see for example; Beckett, 1990; Coles, 1991; Finn, 1990; Gledhill, 1990; Hempel, 1988; Kelly, 1990; Patey, 1995; Slade, 1997). Unfortunately these descriptive personal accounts are not academically rigorous and consequently make only a minimal contribution in the furtherance of knowledge and understanding. Of the authors who have undertaken empirical studies into age discrimination, a large proportion have focused their research upon the plight of the older worker (Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1997; Bird and Fisher, 1986; Bolton et al, 1989; Faley and Kleiman, 1985; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Lyon and Pollard, 1997; McDonald and Potton, 1997; Nichol, 1983; O'Brien et al, 1986).

Age discrimination as a subject area offers a variety of avenues for research. Nevertheless, most of the relevant literature available on age preferences and discrimination can be encapsulated under four main headings, namely:

i. The existence and extent of age discrimination;

ii. The reasons for age preferences;

iii. The legitimacy of age discrimination;

iv. Strategies for addressing age prejudice.

For ease of analysis the pertinent research that has been undertaken in the aforementioned areas will be considered within separate sections. This method of grouping does not follow any particular model and it is possible that an alternative approach might be equally valid. The approach selected is used to enable a diverse body of research to be organised into a set of consistent themes and to ensure that these themes have relevance to later discussions. Before embarking on this substantial review of the literature it may be useful to set the scene in two ways. First, in the following section, some time is devoted to considering the historical development, and contrasting interpretations, of age discrimination. Then, in the subsequent section, several mainstream theories of discrimination are outlined and their applicability to the construct of age is explored.

2.3 What is Age-ism?

Age-ism is not simply another "ism". It is similar to other prominent forms of discrimination insofar as ageism, sexism and racism "are three philosophies that we find offensive and which would expect ordinary, liberal, tolerant, intelligent people to be against" (Bytheway, 1995:9). There are also, however, significant points of dissimilarity.

Age discrimination is both pervasive and dynamic. It is pervasive in that it is likely to affect everyone at some point or another during their life whether within or outside of the work context. Not everyone will have the same sort of direct personal exposure to either racism or sexism. It is dynamic because ageing and therefore ageism is an ongoing process of continuous change. As Bytheway points out: "With rare exceptions, the way in which we are affected by sexism and racism has a degree of continuity throughout our lives" (1995:10). Someone who is born a woman does not slowly become a man or vice versa, equally a black person does not gradually become white, but a young person will gradually become an old person. Or as Bytheway succinctly puts it: "No one is born old" (1995:10).

The term 'ageism' is believed to have been first coined in 1969 by Robert Butler, a psychiatrist, who championed the cause of the elderly regarding the proposed building of a block of high rise flats in Maryland. This initiative was reported in the *Washington Post* and was purported to be "the first time the word 'ageism' appeared in the mass media" (Bytheway, 1995:30). Butler went on to develop and refine his view of ageism (see for example: Butler, 1975; 1978; 1980; Butler and Lewis, 1973). As Gruman comments, through Butler ageism was "given a history" (1978:362).

According to Whitehouse (1978) ageism is "discrimination against people on the basis of chronological age". This description clearly requires further elaboration. A more extensive definition has been provided by Butler and Lewis (1973):

> Ageism can be seen as a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin colour and gender. Old people are categorized as senile, rigid in thought and manner, old fashioned in morality and skills.....Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different from themselves, thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings.

This view of ageism seems to draw heavily on early academic contributions on discrimination in general, and on Leon Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison, in particular. This theory describes the psychological process by which people place themselves within their social milieu. In addition to facilitating direct comparisons with other members of the same reference group, it also gives rise to prejudice when the standards ascribed to one's own group are used to compare the oneself to someone in another group. Moreover, such standards tend to be used unfairly because one's own-group identification is generally seen as the positive pole in the comparison process.

The problem with the 'social comparison theory' of discrimination, and for that matter Butler and Lewis' definition, rests on the notion of different reference groups. This is potentially problematic. As Schonfield reminds us, we have to ask: "Who is stereotyping whom and why?" (1982: 270). It is possible that a significant proportion of those who discriminate against older workers are in fact older workers themselves and therefore members of the same reference group. This raises some interesting questions about the subtlety of discrimination. Can a member of a disadvantaged group be held to

be discriminating against another member of the same group? If a woman treats another woman unfavourable is it sexist? If a black person denigrates or maligns another black person could it constitute racism?

In asking about the 'whom and why of stereotyping', Schonfield is seeking to develop a slightly different, but nevertheless related, line of enquiry. He accuses Butler, among others, of conflating attitudes towards ageing with attitudes toward older people:

> "Holding negative attitudes toward older people merely because they are old is immoral, according to well-nigh universally accepted ethical standards. But is there anything immoral about disliking some of the concomitants of ageing processes? (Schonfield, 1982:271)

More pessimistic and personalised articulations of age discrimination have been provided by Comfort (1977) and de Beauvoir (1977). Comfort suggests that:

> Ageism is the notion that people cease to be people, cease to be the same people or become people of a distinct and inferior kind, by virtue of having lived a specified number of years. The eighteenth-century French naturalist Georges Buffon said, 'to the philosopher, old age must be considered a prejudice.' Ageism is that prejudice. (Comfort, 1977:35)

These sentiments are echoed in the "dark and tragic portrait of old age" (Woodward, 1988:28) provided de Beauvoir:

> When their [older people] economic status is decided upon, society appears to think that they belong to an entirely

> different species: for if all that is needed to feel that one has done one's duty by them is to grant them a wretched pittance, then they have neither the same needs nor the same feelings as other men.
>
> (de Beauvoir, 1977:9)

Although more punchy, and perhaps more cynical, than the earlier definition offered by Butler and Lewis, these interpretations also seem to rely on Festinger's 'social comparison theory'; a group of discriminators - what in de Beauvoir's work is explicitly presented 'younger people' - and a separate group who are discriminated against (i.e., 'older people').

A more informative and comprehensive definition of age discrimination, which will be used as the basis for the subsequent analysis of the phenomenon undertaken in this thesis, is developed by Bytheway and Johnson (1990). They state:

> "1. Ageism is a set of beliefs originating in the biological variation between people and relating to the ageing process.
>
> 2. It is in the action of corporate bodies, what is said and done by their representatives, and the resulting views that are held by ordinary ageing people, that ageism is made manifest.
>
> In consequence of this, it follows that:
>
> (a) Ageism generates and reinforces a fear and denigration of the ageing process, and stereotyping presumptions regarding competence and the need for protection.
>
> (b) In particular, ageism legitimates the use of chronological age to mark out classes of people who are systematically denied resources and opportunities that others enjoy, and who suffer the consequence of such denigration, ranging from well-meaning patronage to unambiguous vilification."

This definition manages to avoid the problems associated with 'social comparison theory' and the limiting of ageism towards a particular age group (i.e., older people). It also acknowledges through the incorporation of phrases such as "systematically denied resources", that ageism can be covert, indirect, unintentional and institutionalised and not simply a personally held set of premeditated and deliberate prejudices.

2.4 Age and Contemporary Theories of Discrimination

In the previous section, the utility of 'social comparison theory' (Festinger, 1954) as a means of capturing the essence of age discrimination was briefly discussed. In order to help locate and focus the analysis of ageism this section considers the relevance of some of the other mainstream theories of discrimination.

Through their analysis of the position of women and minorities in management, Morrison and Von Glinow (1990) developed a three-part classification of discrimination. First, they identified a set of theories which claim that particular characteristics of under-represented groups are largely responsible for their differential treatment (difference theories). Second, they pointed to theories based upon discrimination by the majority population arising from bias and stereotyping. And finally, they highlighted that some theories focus on "structural, systemic discrimination as the root cause of differential treatment rather than actions or characteristics of individuals" (p. 201).

Morrison and Von Glinow's work provides a useful framework for further analysis and will therefore be used to structure the subsequent discussion of theories. It is important to establish from the outset that many of the theories of discrimination are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, in some instances, the distinguishing features between certain theories are more to do with contrasting interpretations than substantive differences. At a broader level, the difference between Morrison and Von Glinow's (1990) first two groupings of theories appears to rest upon the distinction that Noon and Blyton (1997) make between 'fair' and 'unfair' discrimination. They comment:

> "...discrimination is about applying various criteria to choose between people, so the key issue becomes the fairness of the criteria upon which the discrimination is based. Fair criteria lead to discrimination that is justifiable (fair discrimination), whereas unfair criteria lead to unfair discrimination, which is unjustifiable and about which something needs to be done." (1997:168)

On the one hand, 'difference theories' - which espouse that discernible differences exist between groups - argue that the process of matching prevalent characteristics with appropriate job criteria results in a form of workplace discrimination which can, to a greater or lesser extent, be regarded as fair. On the other hand, 'discrimination theories' posit a process of assessment which relies upon assumptions about the characteristics of the particular group to which a given individual belongs is invariably biased and is usually

a product of unwarranted stereotypes rather than genuinely discernible differences and, therefore, is unfair.

'Difference theories' of discrimination can be subdivided into two further subgroupings: theories which focus on psychological and physiological differences (Riger and Galligan, 1980) and those concerned with an economic explanation (Blau and Ferber, 1987). When applied to age discrimination, theories based on psychological and physiological differences may prove to be pertinent. In particular, the way in which the ageing process leads to physical and mental deterioration may inform work-related judgements about older and younger workers which could be construed as being either fair (based on genuine differences) or unfair (based on unwarranted stereotypes).

The economic explanation of differences between groups is based upon 'human capital theory' (Blau and Ferber, 1987) which suggests that individuals are rewarded for their investment in education and job training. Differential treatment arises because some groups (e.g. women) choose to accept a wage while others (e.g. men) invest in acquiring skills and knowledge to qualify for higher-paying jobs. The extent to which criteria such as 'recently qualified' and 'outdated knowledge' are applied as judgements in determining the employability of older and younger workers is an aspect of age discrimination which perhaps resonates with aspects of 'human capital theory'.

Theories of discrimination which focus on the bias of a dominant group as the source of differential treatment, like 'difference theories', can be reduced to an economic and a psychological perspective. An economic theory of discrimination arises from a process of market substitution (Becker, 1957) in which women and minorities are hired "at a wage discount large enough to compensate for the loss of utility or level of discomfort associated with employing them" (Morrison and Von Glinow, 1920:202). This dual labour market explanation raises questions about the employment of older and younger workers, particularly in unskilled occupations where younger and older workers are prevalent (e.g. 'fast food' outlets for younger workers and night porters/security for older workers).

The psychological perspective on theories of discrimination suggests that bias results from the inappropriate stereotyping of groups (Davis and Watson, 1982; Powell, 1988). Festinger's (1954) 'social comparison theory' is the most prominent psychological contribution which underpins the 'own group/other group' basis of stereotyping. As discussed earlier, Festinger's work has implications for both the conceptualisation and analysis of ageism.

The final grouping of theories is concerned with systemic barriers and structural discrimination. 'Intergroup theory' (Alderfer, 1986; Thomas and Alderfer, 1989) suggests that organisations contain 'identity groups' (based upon race, ethnicity, gender or age) and 'organisation groups' (based on common work task, work experiences and position in the hierarchy). Alderfer argues that because certain

groups predominate in high-status positions and due to the patterns of group relations which reflect society as a whole, members of disadvantaged groups are systematically deprived of opportunities and resources. Given that age is one of the identity groups highlighted by Alderfer it seems reasonable to assume that it may potentially have some bearing on access to resources in the same way as race and gender.

A further set of systemic barriers are encapsulated in 'secondary labour market theories' of discrimination. This grouping shares some common ground with 'human capital theory', however, it argues that disadvantaged groups' access training and education is not one of personal choice via an investment decision (Thurow, 1969). Moreover, as Larwood and Gartiker (1987) point out, there is a market consisting of a set of primary well-paid jobs and a set of secondary jobs with little mobility between the two. Although there is a certain amount of overlap between this theory and the earlier one regarding labour market substitution, the main difference is that the 'secondary labour market' theory can be seen as macro-structural phenomenon (Osajima, 1988) while the 'labour substitution' theory is more of a premeditated micro-level strategy utilised by managers to discriminate by attempting to employing certain groups at lower rates of pay. Although age may have an impact upon one's placement in the labour market it is perhaps likely to be of secondary importance to other variables such as gender, race and class.

2.5 The Existence and Extent of Age Discrimination

This section examines the prevalence of age discrimination in employment in the UK and reviews literature pertaining to the existence of age-ism according to age grouping, gender, occupation, and industrial sector. An international dimension is also incorporated to establish how the UK compares to other countries in terms of age prejudice and discriminatory practice.

2.5.1 Overt Indicators

Job Advertisement Sampling. One of the most commonly used research methods for establishing the existence of overt age discrimination has been advertisement sampling. The inclusion of specific age requirements in advertisements is overt because it openly indicates a preference for applicants of a certain age group and purposefully excludes others. A comparison of the advertisement samples undertaken since 1971 demonstrates that a significant proportion of advertisements contain age references, (see Table 2.1 overleaf).

The lowest proportion of advertisements mentioning age (10%) being recorded by Tillsley in 1990 and the highest was 66% (The Equal Opportunities Commission in 1985). The aggregated results of the various studies taken shows that out of a total of 41,055 advertisements 13,539 (33%) contained a direct age reference.

Table 2.1 - A Comparison of the Use of Age References in Job Advertisement Surveys Between 1971 & 1990

Year	Researcher[1]	Sample[2] Size	No. of Adverts with Age Ref.	% of Adverts with Age Ref.
1971	Kiernan	251	151	60
1973	Slater	1250	500	40
1978	Jolly et al	16202	6481	40
1981	Kiernan	323	157	45
1982	Arbose	98	41	42
1985	E.O.C.	123	81	66
1986	Naylor (a)	932	298	32
1986	Naylor (b)	3618	1483	41
1987	Rock	457	183	40
1989	Rubenstein	11373	3120	27
1990	Putley	47	24	51
1990	Tillsley	5050	526	10
1991	Oswick (a)	1331	494	37
	Totals	41055	13539	33

Job advertisement sampling has featured as a very prominent method of investigating the existence of ageism. The popularity of this form of documentary analysis can be primarily attributed to the simplicity of the research design and the relative speed of execution.

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[1]See bibliography for research references.

[2]All samples based on national and local press with the exception of; Jolly (employment agency records), Arbose (executive questionnaire), Putley (only accountancy positions), and Naylor (a) and Oswick (a) which considered only personnel vacancies.

However, caution is required when interpreting the results of this approach. The severest limitation of the technique is the extent to which the results are generalizable. Job advertisement surveys provide a "snapshot" of overt age specification. They identify the proportion of advertisements mentioning age at a given point in time and for a given population. It is not possible to draw meaningful inferences regarding either a growth or decline in the prevalence of age limits. In order to extrapolate trends some form of longitudinal analysis is required. Direct comparisons between these studies are also of only limited value because they are often based on disparate samples. These differences in sample populations perhaps account for the variance in results for the studies presented in table 2.1.

In addition to the problems identified above, a further criticism can be levelled at advertisement samples as indicators of the existence of age prejudice. Age limits certainly involve age discrimination, however, it not possible to determine from advertisements whether or not this outcome was intended by the prospective employer. Although age references might provide a strong indicator, they do not prove premeditated age bias. Albeit unlikely, it is possible that in the majority of advertisements which include an age restriction, do so only as a rough guide for candidates, or because it is part of a long standing convention regarding layout which has not been subjected to any form of critical review.

Questionnaire Based Research. Research questionnaires which offer insights into the patterns of, and motives underlying, age

preferences will be discussed in later sections. Here the discussion focuses upon questionnaires which incorporate findings which seek to quantify the existence of age-ism, rather than explain or justify it.

A survey undertaken by Horn (1988) found that seventy-three per cent of recruitment executives (n = 240) felt that companies prefer to employ people under 40 years old. Interestingly, the respondents were far more forthcoming when talking about the existence of age discrimination in general terms (i.e. most companies), than they were about their own companies. Oswick (1991b) also examined employers' views of the extent of ageist practices. He questioned eighty-five personnel practitioners drawn from a variety of organisations. Three-quarters of the participants indicated that they did not support the arbitrary use of age restrictions in employment decisions. However, four-out-of-five felt that there were occasions where age could be legitimately used as a criterion when making employment decisions.

The results of questionnaires which are targeted at employers need to be interpreted with caution. Inevitably, surveys of this kind can suffer from response bias and are frequently of questionable validity. Response bias can occur because the employers are often guarded about, unaware of, or unwilling to discuss, their own organisation's attitude towards older and younger workers. This consequently brings into question the validity of the studies, given that respondents tend to externalise age-ism by talking about age-ism in industry as a whole when their experience and knowledge of other

companies is often limited. The end result is not far short of an analysis of employers' speculations regarding the existence of age discrimination.

A more reliable way to develop insights into age discrimination is to survey the groups who are potential recipients of age-ist behaviour. A survey conducted by KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock in conjunction with the Institute of Personnel Management (1990) asked 2,787 managers and professional staff, between 40-55 years of age, about their personal experience of age-ism. Only eighteen per cent indicated that their organisation operated an age bar in terms of recruitment. However, more than a third of respondents (36%) felt that an age bar operated on internal promotions. A research report published by the "Campaign for Work" (1991) considered the fortunes of a sample of unemployed workers (n = 430) in Hertfordshire. Sixty-six per cent (n = 183) claimed that: "their age caused them difficulty in their search for work."

Surveys targeted at the recipients rather than the instigators of ageism still need to be treated with caution. For example, the unemployed respondents in the above study who said that their age was an obstacle to finding employment are in many instances speculating about why employers have turned them down. Are job applicants claims of ageist treatment frequently just a convenient excuse rather than an accurate interpretation of reality? Recipient-based accounts of ageism may be prone to inherent perceptual bias related to the well known psychological phenomenon of the

'fundamental attribution error' (Kelley, 1971) - a process of rationalising failure by externally attributing causation in order to maintain a positive self-image (i.e. it is not my fault, it is those bias employers).

In the U.S.A., where age discrimination is unlawful, a survey of 4,500 people drawn from the general population revealed that:

> "80% thought that employers discriminated unfairly against older people and made employment more difficult for them. The view was supported by 97% of those surveyed who had personal responsibility for hiring and firing."
>
> (Tavernier, 1979)

The findings of researchers using a questionnaire-based methodology generally support the conclusions reached by researchers using secondary data sources (namely, job advertisement samples). Both bodies of research support the existence of overt age discrimination in the workplace.

2.5.2 An International Perspective

Research carried out by Arbose (1982) indicates that the inclusion of age requirements in job advertisements is in fact an international phenomenon. Arbose's survey was based on a random sample of 878 executives in ten western European countries. He asked each of them if their company specified age limits in job advertisements; the results of his research are presented in table 2.2.

Table 2.2 An International Comparison of the Use of Age Limits in Job Advertisements

Country	Total No. of Respondents	% of Respondents who Specify Age Limits
Sweden	93	8.6
France	65	18.5
Germany	94	31.9
Switzerland	102	32.4
Denmark	94	36.2
Belgium	89	37.1
UK	98	41.8
Spain	85	47.1
Italy	82	48.8
Netherlands	76	64.5
Totals	878	36.4

Source: Arbose (1982)

Unfortunately, table 2.2. does not tell the whole story. It is not possible to draw direct inferences about attitudes towards ageism based upon the proportion of age restrictions in job advertisements. When making international comparisons it is important to bear in mind that in a number of countries the expression of overt age discrimination is moderated by the existence of age-related legislation. For instance, in the U.S.A., the 1967 Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) regulates the enactment of blatant age-ism. The main provisions of the ADEA make it illegal to use age as a criterion for employment decisions of any kind for those aged between 40 and 70. The defined purpose of the Act is:

> ' to promote employment of older workers based on their ability rather than age; to prohibit arbitrary age discrimination in employment; to help employers and workers find ways of meeting problems arising from the impact of age on employment." (ADEA, 1967)

Several other countries have introduced legislation prohibiting different forms of age discrimination. For example; Canada, Finland, France, Israel and Mexico, have made it illegal to hire individuals on the basis of their age.

The presence of legislative measures in a country, such as the ADEA, frequently impact upon the nature of the expression of age-ism. However, it is wrong to conclude that this automatically leads to a reduction. The introduction of law constraining age-ism may simply give rise to more sophisticated and subtle means of discrimination. In other words, a shift merely occurs from overt age-ism to covert age-ism. An example of this is provided by Tavernier (1979) when commenting on age legislation in France. French law requires publishers to submit any advertisements they receive with upper age limits to a government agency. To circumvent this requirement employers ask job applicants to supply a photograph which provides an opportunity for subtle age discrimination to take place.

A comparable difficulty arises when attempting to identify a pattern regarding the existence of overt discrimination in countries without age legislation. For instance, there is a marked difference in the use of age limits in job advertisements between Sweden and the U.K. (see table 2.2). This variation cannot be attributed to the legal

framework given that neither country has age legislation. It has more to do with wider social attitudes towards equality of opportunity. Hence, in Sweden, the expression of job-related age preference is so socially unacceptable that legislation is seen as unrequired, while in the UK age preferences are widely seen as legitimate and legislation is therefore regarded as an inappropriate measure. The implications, and potential effectiveness, of introducing age legislation in the U.K. is discussed at greater length in section 2.8.

2.5.3 Disadvantaged Age Groups

This section considers the extent to which specific age groups are disadvantaged in employment decision making. Employment decisions are sub-divided into decisions pertaining to selection, retention and development. This enables comparisons of the relationship between the kind of decision and the impact upon particular age groups to be assessed.

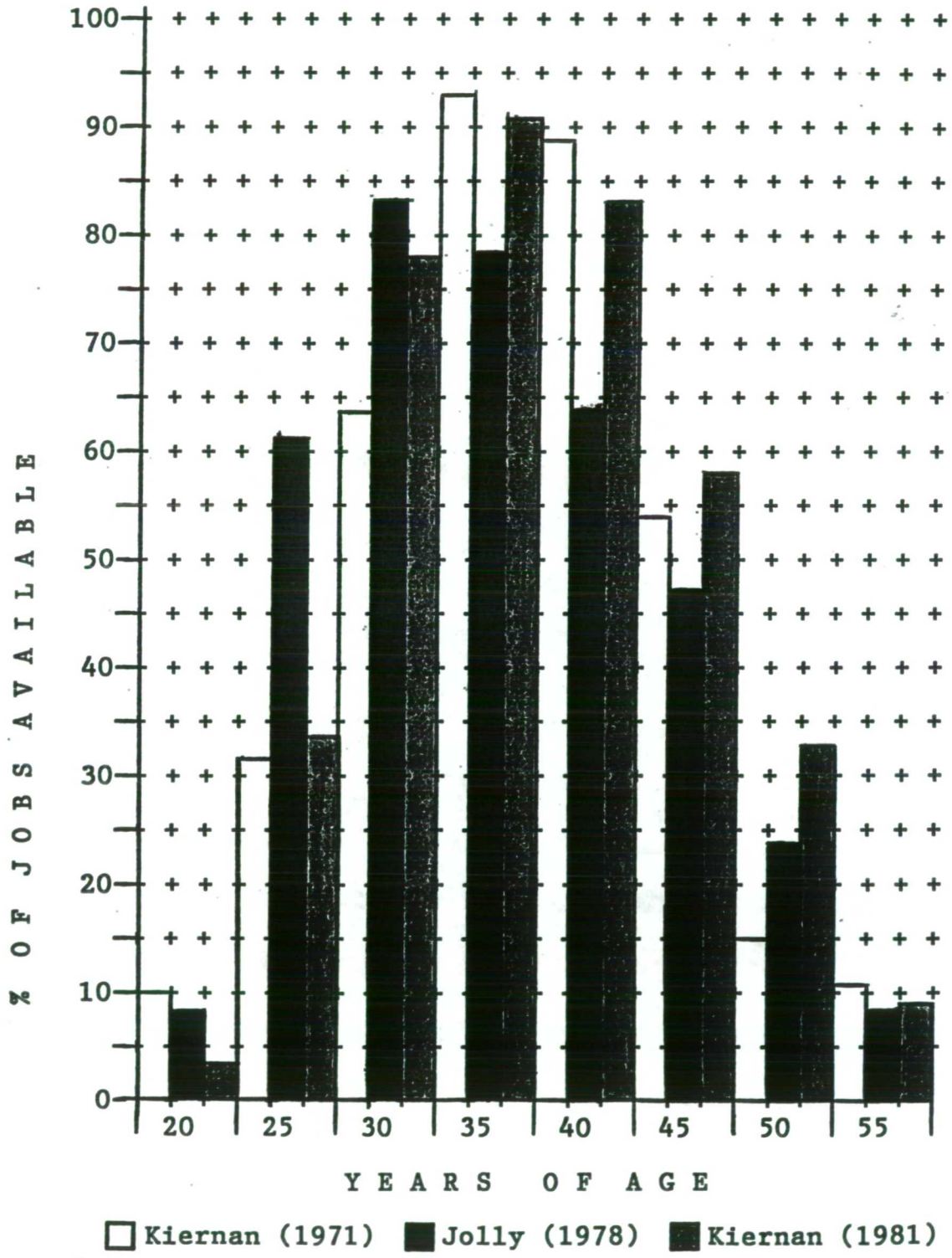
Recruitment and Selection Decisions. The literature available on age preferences in job advertisements clearly supports the existence of age discrimination. However, this does raise further questions. Which age groups are discriminated against in advertisements? And, to what extent are they disadvantaged? One method of examining the effects of age restrictions in advertisements is to identify the proportion of jobs available to individuals of particular age groups. This approach has been adopted by Kiernan (1981) and

also by Jolly, Creigh and Mingay (1978a). Kiernan examined a sample of newspaper advertisements which contained age references. By calculating which age group was excluded by each advertisement it was possible to identify the overall proportion of jobs available at a given age. Jolly, Creigh and Mingay, used the same approach and analysed 7,500 professional and executive vacancies notified to the Training Agency's Professional and Executive Recruitment unit (PER).

The outcome of these studies have been amalgamated and presented overleaf (see figure 2.1). The findings of both studies appear to be quite consistent. The conclusions drawn in both cases were that younger and older workers suffer the most from age restrictions in advertisements. For example, at 20 years of age the average proportion of jobs available is 7%, and at 55 years old the availability is 9%. By contrast at 30, 35 and 40 years old the number of jobs available dramatically increases (75%, 87% and 78% respectively).

Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. Naylor (1987b) talked of the 'golden decade' between 30 and 40 years old, having identified in his research that more than two thirds of the advertisements mentioning age were for those between 30 and 40. A survey carried out by MSL Consultants found that out of 928 advertisements which had age requirements, 88% specified an upper age limit of 40 or below, and only 2.5% asked for candidates over 46 years old. Slater (1973) examined advertisements which had age

Figure 2.1 - A Histogram of the Proportion of Jobs Available According to Age



ranges and found that the mean age range for advertisements is 27.1 to 38.5 years old.

There does not appear to be any published research which contradicts the above findings on age preferences in job advertisements. However, from their study of the vacancies notified to the Manpower Services Comission's unit on Professional and Executive Recruitment (PER), Jolly et al (1978b) have argued that the inclusion of age preferences in advertisements does not necessarily lead to age discrimination. They compared the supply of age restricted jobs (PER vacancies) against the demand for them (PER registrants). They found that whilst the number of jobs available to the younger and older worker were considerably restricted, the number of registrants was also correspondingly lower. For instance, the proportion of jobs available at 20 years old is 8%, whilst the proportion of registrants is only 5.1%. Equally, at 55 years old 8% of jobs are available compared to 7.7% registrants.

The implication, according to Jolly, Creigh and Mingay (1978b), is that age restrictions do not necessarily have an adverse effect upon the young or the old because the proportion of jobs available, although lower than for those between 35 and 45 yrs old, is matched by the proportion of older and younger registrants. This assertion relies on a false assumption about job availability. Jolly, Creigh and Mingay's findings are misleading because the proportion of jobs available are not normally limited to just the one particular age, e.g. if an advertisement states that applicants should be over 25 years

old it is then incorporated in the 'jobs available' calculation for 26 year olds up to 65 year olds. Therefore, the assumption is that a 60 year old has as much chance as a 30 year old, which in practice is unlikely to be the case. It is more informative to directly compare the ratio of registrants to vacancies at a given age. Using Jolly's figures of 7,500 vacancies and 114,850 registrants, table 2.3 demonstrates that the conclusions reached by Jolly et al are not supported by their own research. Indeed, the results highlight that a 35 year old has more than three times as many chances of finding employment that a 55 year old, and twice the number of chances of a 20 year old.

Table 2.3 A Comparison of PER Vacancies and PER Registrants According to Age

Age	No. of Registrants	No. of Vacancies	% of Reg's	% of Vac's	Ratio of Regs/Vacs
20	5857	600	5.1	8	10 : 1
35	26760	5625	23.3	75	5 : 1
55	8843	600	7.7	8	15 : 1

Source: Adapted from Jolly, Creigh and Mingay (1978b)

Although there might be some inconsistencies, and even disagreement, between researchers regarding the actual magnitude of age discrimination, there is general agreement regarding its existence. The literature presented confirms that age is often used as a recruitment criterion. Out of more than 41,000 vacancies, over 33% included age references (see table 2.1). Furthermore, the bulk

of research supports the view that the inclusion of age references in job advertisements leads to both the younger and the older worker being disadvantaged.

Retention Decisions. Retention decisions can be seen as incorporating redundancy, redeployment, retirement and dismissal. Only a limited amount of research has been undertaken which examines the influence of age on retention decisions. Many authors engaged in research in this area have taken as a starting point the relative employment participation rates of differing age groups (see for example; Coulson-Thomas, 1989; Harper, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Parker, 1982; Wells, 1989). Perhaps not surprisingly, older workers do not fare as well as their younger counterparts in terms of participation. However, these results can be misleading if viewed in isolation for they do not indicate that age discrimination has occurred. The participation figures are skewed by the hidden proportion of older workers who voluntarily choose to retire early and those who are affluent enough to simply choose not to work.

Trinder (1989) carried out a longitudinal study of labour force retention, according to age, in a single organisation (see table 2.4 overleaf). During a thirteen year period of gradual decline the company age profile shifted towards of a younger workforce indicating that more younger workers were being retained. The underlying reason for this outcome is inconclusive. It may be explained by age bias. However, it may equally be due to voluntary redundancy and retirement, rather than compulsory terminations.

Further evidence identifying the reasons for leaving is clearly required in order to establish the enactment of age prejudice in this instance.

Table 2.4 Changing Age Structure of a Declining Company Between 1974-1987

Year	Under 50yrs (%)	50-55yrs (%)	Over 55yrs (%)	Average Age (yrs)
1974	60.2	16.8	23.0	43.6
1977	65.8	15.1	19.1	41.1
1980	71.8	11.9	16.3	39.4
1983	80.0	11.4	8.6	37.9
1986	91.7	6.7	1.6	35.7
1987	94.1	4.9	1.0	35.2

Source: Trinder (1988)

Stronger evidence of age discrimination in retention decisions is provided in a study conducted by Lazcko et al (1988). A total of 1,373 males between the ages of 60-64 were asked the reason for leaving their last job. Redundancy, early retirement, and ill health, were cited by respondents. Just over 10% of the sample (n=139) indicated that the had been discouraged by their employer from continuing to work. Discouragement was particularly prevalent in cases of redundancy (66% of all instances). Inferences drawn by Alan Walker provide corroboration of these findings, he comments:

> "Data from the national Labour Force Survey in Britain show that the majority of unemployed and discouraged men aged 60-64 had been dismissed or made redundant. Among the

> early retired, the main reason given for leaving a person's last job was that their employer had introduced an early retirement scheme in order to reduce staff. This indicates that the vast majority of non-employed men aged 60-64 left their last job involuntarily and the proportion of 55-59 year olds doing so was even greater." (Walker, 1990)

The research presented generally supports the view that age is often used as a factor in making retention decisions. And, in particular, there is some stronger evidence to suggest that older workers are discriminated against by employers in redundancy situations.

Training and Development Decisions. There is an abundance of literature which calls for action to provide better training opportunities for older workers as a means of combating skill and labour shortages (see for example: Bove, 1987; Mintz, 1986; Naylor, 1990; Rosen and Jerdee, 1989). Illustrations of good practice have also been provided. For example, Vize's (1990) analysis of apprenticeship schemes for older workers, and Tesco's mature entrants programme (Lennon, 1990). Literature which attempts to identify and/or quantify the existence of age bias in training decision-making is far more scarce. An extensive review revealed only three empirical studies into age-related training activity (Coulson-Thomas, 1989; Lazcko and Lee, 1990; Metcalf and Thompson, 1990).

Metcalf and Thompson (1990) interviewed Personnel Directors and senior Personnel Managers in 20 major organisations to establish the nature and extent of training opportunities for older workers.

They found that the primary area of training exposure was induction training which was often compulsory. Apart from this training, older workers in the organisations studied did not appear to receive much training. However, they provided a cautionary note to this finding:

> "In the absence of a detailed survey of workers' experiences of, and attitudes to, training it is difficult to establish whether older workers are denied access to training or training resources compared to other workers."
>
> (Metcalf and Thompson, 1990)

Lazcko and Lee (1990) reported the findings of the Labour Force Survey (see table 2.5). The study recorded the proportion of employees who had received job-related training during the four weeks prior to being interviewed.

Table 2.5 Labour Force Survey of Job-related Training According to Age and Sex[3]

Age Group	1985	1986	1987
Males aged:			
16-19	29.3	26.9	25.5
20-24	17.9	17.7	18.1
25-34	12.6	13.1	14.4
35-49	8.7	9.3	9.9
50-64	3.4	3.8	4.2
Females aged:			
16-19	18.7	17.8	17.3
20-24	13.6	14.3	15.3
25-34	10.5	11.7	13.0
35-49	7.0	7.7	9.9
50-64	4.0	4.3	5.2

Source: Lazcko & Lee (1990)

[3]Those receiving training in last 4 weeks is expressed as a percentage of all employees in the age band.

Table 2.5 clearly shows that, as a proportion of their age group, fewer older workers receive occupational-based training than their younger counterparts. However, between 1985 and 1987, the level of training has marginally improved for both men and women over 50. Training Agency figures provided by Coulson-Thomas (1990) also support Lazcko and Lee's findings. He found that employees in the 19-24 age group received almost twice as much training as those aged 35-59. Coulson-Thomas also examined the main reasons offered by individuals for not undertaking desired vocational education and training. Family commitments and a lack of employer support accounted for the most pronounced disparity between age groups. Almost 20% of older workers (35-59 yrs old) gave family commitments as a reason for not training, compared to 13% of 19-34 year olds. 'No support from employer' was cited by 11% of the younger male age group, whilst only 6% of older males quoted this reason. Coulson's results do not indicate any strong differences between age groups in terms of their motives for not training.

2.5.4 Occupational Grouping and Age-ism

The extent to which certain age groups are favoured by employers tends to vary according to occupation. For example, Coulson-Thomas (1991) observed that only one out of every six managing directors is below 40 years of age. Furthermore, the perception of 'old' and 'young' differs from one occupation to another, e.g. forty is 'old' for someone working on the stock market, by contrast sixty would not be

considered 'old' in the world of academia, and a high court judge aged sixty may well be labelled as 'young'.

Tillsley (1990) highlighted disparities between white-collar and blue-collar occupations. She found a predominance of age bars in white-collar job advertisements. The proportion of age-restricted blue-collar vacancies was considerably lower. Interestingly, the findings of a study carried out by Thompson (1991) are almost in diametric opposition to those reached by Tillsley. Thompson concluded that "the majority of occupations with maximum recruitment ages are in the skilled/semi-skilled areas." He went on to indicate that restrictions are less common in the professional, managerial and technical categories. These conflicting results can be at least partially explained by the use of differing research methodologies and the focal point of the study. Tillsley examined a documentary source of data, i.e.; job advertisements in the local and national press mentioning age. Thompson questioned practising managers.

It is possible that age limits, applied by managers to manual jobs, occur during the shortlisting and/or interviewing phases, rather than when the advertisement is placed. Consequently, because Tillsley's analysis concentrates on advertisements she concludes the incidence of age bars in blue-collars advertisements is relatively low. However, Thompson considers all stages of the recruitment process a reaches a different conclusion.

A different approach was adopted by Metcalf and Thompson (1990). They asked managers to indicate the kind of jobs for which older workers were particularly well suited and those for which they were unsuitable (see table 2.6). They found that the jobs cited as suiting older workers could be summarised as jobs which involved; 'being there', 'life experience', and 'low skill, low responsibility, highly repetitive' jobs. Jobs seen as unsuitable for older workers fell into three broad categories: jobs which are physically demanding, time pressured and/or IT based.

Table 2.6 Older Workers' Suitability for Specific Jobs

Jobs Suited to	Jobs Not Suited to
routine clerical jobs	IT related jobs
selling jobs	sales department
counselling/caring jobs	heavy manual jobs
tedium jobs	stressful office jobs
waste disposal	warehouse work
cooks	fast food outlets
porters	pilots

Source: Metcalf & Thompson (1990)

2.5.5 Industrial Sector and Age-ism

Only a limited volume of research has considered age preferences at an industrial level. Several authors have sought to identify the distribution of older workers according to industry (see for example; Jolly et al, 1980; Makeham, 1980; Thompson, 1991). However, this

form of analysis does not provide insights into the existence of age prejudice.

One facet of sector-based age discrimination which has been explored is the contrasting levels of overt discrimination expressed by the public and private sectors. Naylor (1987a), Oswick (1991a) and Tillsley (1990) have all independently identified a marked difference in the prevalence of age restrictions in jobs advertised by the public and private sectors. Naylor (1987a:45), in his analysis of personnel jobs, observed that "a significant number of the advertisements in *Personnel Management* are for personnel jobs in the public sector, and very few of these mentioned age. He goes on to say: "....when personnel managers in the private sector are recruiting personnel people a large number feel the need to mention age in their advertisements" (p. 45). In her analysis of local and national advertisements, Tillsley (1990) drew a similar conclusion to that reached by Naylor (1987a). She found the citation of age was five times greater among private sector organisations than public sector ones. And, in a study of almost 2,000 job advertisements, Oswick (1991a) found that: "30 per cent of private sector posts mentioned age, compared to only 2 per cent for the public sector" (p. 19).

Differences in the use age restrictions in job advertising between the public and private sectors does not in itself indicate a difference in attitudes towards age discrimination. It may simply suggest that public sector organisations are more adept at presenting a public face of fairness and equality and using politically correct language in

their advertisements. In this sense, the commitment to non-ageist recruitment may be more rhetorical than real.

More recently, support for the existence discernible differences between the private and public sectors has been offered by Noon and Blyton (1997). They contend that privatisation and compulsory competitive tendering has had an adverse effect upon equality opf opportunities insofar as: "It was in the public sector that many equal opportunity positive action initiatives were enacted" (1997:185). Equally, Hayward et al's (1997) survey of 518 employers has provided some further insights into sector-based differences. First, they found that only 3 out of every 10 private sector employers were aware of the IPD's guidance (IPM, 1991) on age discrimination; for those in public sector organisations, this proportion rose to 8 out of 10. Second, they demonstrated that more that twice as many public sector employers (37%) supported the introduction of legislation as did their private sector counterparts (17%). These latter findings constitute more reliable indicators of substantive differences in levels of awareness and commitment regarding ageism.

2.5.6 Gender and Age-ism

In the field of social gerontology issues pertaining to gender have received extensive coverage, particularly relating to differences in the ageing process and the care of the elderly (see for example; Atchley, 1972; Harris and Cole, 1980; Hendricks and Davis-Hendricks, 1986; Maddox, 1987). However, as a discipline,

industrial gerontology has largely ignored gender as an intervening variable in employment. Two notable exceptions are the work of Dale and Bamford (1988) and O'Brien et al (1986).

Dale and Bamford carried out an analysis of Department of Employment statistics. They concluded that whilst women are over-represented in the peripheral workforce under retirement age, there is a marked erosion of these gender differences within the post-retirement age group. O'Brien et al (1986) considered the effect of supervisor gender on attitude toward older employees and concluded that female supervisors were more unfavourable in their evaluations of older employees. This finding is particularly surprising given that a previous study (London and Popawski, 1976) found women to be more lenient appraisers than men when evaluating employees covering a broad range of ages.

2.6 The Reasons for Age Preferences

There are a multitude of reasons offered by employers in support of their particular age preferences. A comprehensive study of the reasons given for imposing age limits in job advertisements has been provided by Slater (1973). He sent questionnaires to 500 employers who had placed advertisements in the Daily Telegraph's 'Professional and Executive' column in 1973. He asked them what their main reasons were for stating an age limit. The overall response rate on the questionnaire was quite high at 69%. The

actual reasons given by respondents were classified into several groups, namely:

i. Personal Reasons	49%
ii. Structural Reasons	42%
iii. Work Reasons	6%
iv. Other Reasons	3%

Collins (1975) replicated Slater's approach and categories in a questionnaire survey of recruiters placing personnel management job advertisements which mentioned age. He found that 47% gave 'personal reasons' (of which the majority stated individual constraints), 31% offered 'structural reasons' (mainly age balance and succession planning), 2% were 'work reasons' (primarily the pressures of work and the ability to cope), and 20% gave 'other reasons' (which included vague and ambiguous responses).

It may be useful to elaborate further on the four broad categories of reason offered by Slater. For Slater (1973), 'personal reasons' referred to characteristics of the people which prospective employers were attempting to exclude. These characteristics were sub-divided into; individual constraints, external constraints and technical constraints. The 'individual constraints' included the applicants abilities, energy, degree of achievement and settledness. The external constraints were family commitments and social standing. Technical constraints incorporated the applicant's outdated knowledge, lack of expertise and technical experience.

Structural Reasons, according to Slater (1973), related to characteristics of the employing organisation, rather than those of the individual. This area was sub-divided into: succession planning, age balance, economy reasons, pension reasons, and general policy. Succession planning and age balance reasons refer to manpower planning and age profiling initiatives. Economy reasons were identified as the return on investment of new employees and potential length of service. Pension reasons were seen as being the impracticality or expense of older workers joining pension schemes, however this reason has now superseded by revisions to pension arrangements. Finally, general policy was given as a reason where the firm had a long standing formal or informal policy regarding age limits.

The third broad area of age-related justification forwarded by employers was 'work reasons'. Slater (1973) suggested work reasons referred to specific characteristics of the worker and/or the working environment, for example; the pressure of work, level of responsibility, excessive travelling required, and superior/subordinate relationships.

Other miscellaneous reasons offered in support of age restrictions in job advertisements were given as 'providing information' and for 'filtering'. Providing information suggests that age limits are only used to provide information to applicants about a preferred age range not for the purpose of direct exclusion. The other reason given

was that age limits provided a simple mechanism for filtering the total number of applicants.

2.7 The Legitimacy of Age Discrimination

It is useful to explore the underlying assumptions and views which lead to the development of the stated reasons for age preferences. Are the reasons based on factual considerations, or stereotyped views of older and younger workers? It is often difficult to distinguish accurately between the two.

For most researchers the issue of legitimacy seems to hinge upon whether or not there are psychological and/or physiological differences between older workers and their younger counterparts. Those who believe that older workers are less able assume that discrimination on the grounds of age is therefore logical, and thus justifiable. Contrastingly, age bias is not advocated by either those who suggest that such comparisons are odious, or those who believe that differences in abilities and make-up cannot generally be attributed to age.

2.7.1 Age and Job Performance

A number of authors have analysed the relationship between age and job performance. There appears to be a commonly held belief that performance deteriorates with age (e.g. Craft et al, 1979; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976; Skinner, 1983). Conversely, research undertaken by Giniger et al (1983) suggests that job performance actually

improves with age. Their study indicated that older workers had lower absence levels, fewer accidents, greater output, and lower turnover, than their younger counterparts. Several other studies (c.f., Forteza and Prieto, 1994; Mayrand, 1992; Smith, 1990; Warr, 1994) have indicated that there is often either a positive or 'no difference' statistical association between a worker's age and many aspects of job performance.

Rhodes (1983) reviewed the literature available on the influence of age on job performances. She concluded that there were approximately equal numbers of studies reporting that job performance increases with age, decreases, or remains the same.

One of the most thorough treatments of age differences in job performance has been conducted by Waldman and Avolio (1986). They carried out a meta-analysis of 13 published studies (combining 37 independent samples) on the relationship between age and job performance. Meta-analysis enabled the study findings to be pooled, resulting in an average correlation being obtained, and allowing the elimination of undesirable variance. The conclusion they reached was that the results of the meta-analysis do not support the view that job performance declines with age. Therefore, the stereotyped view of the older worker being slower and less productive does not appear to be generally supported in a statistical analysis of the evidence available. In a subsequent study using meta-analysis, McEvoy and Cascio (1989) produced similar findings to Waldman

and Avolio. They concluded that age accounts for very little variance in work performance.

Avolio et al (1990) have argued that: "A theoretical understanding of age and work performance must begin with a broader framework of the general determinants of an individual's work performance" (p.408). Using Blumberg and Pringle's (1982) model of work performance - in which performance is the product of ability, motivation and context (or opportunity) - Avolio et al suggest that ageing can be viewed as a dimension along which these three factors may systematically change over time. In considering 'context' they assert that the type of occupation being examined "will moderate the linear relationship between work performance and age" (1990: 410). This is consistent with Sparrow and Davies' (1988) finding that the strength of relationship between age and quality of job performance depended on the level of complexity of the work being undertaken.

The overriding conclusion reached by Avolio et al (1990) was that age had very little impact upon performance, but that length of experience had a significant effect. This is in line with several other studies which have shown work experience, rather than age, to be consistently and positively related to work performance (McDaniel et al, 1988; McEnrue, 1988; Schmidt et al, 1986).

Ageing and work experience can be described as sharing a common temporal base insofar as experience can only be gained over time and ageing is a continuous process which occurs over time. As we age we

gain experience and, equally, as we gain experience we age. Given this linkage, it is easy to see why age and experience sometimes become conflated when considering work performance; if someone is 'old' they are likely to have more experience than someone else who is 'younger' and, therefore, less experienced Unfortunately, this connect takes no account of the contextual nature of experience. Although an older worker might have more 'life experience' than a younger counterpart (s)he may, or may not, have as much relevant 'work experience'. This perhaps, at least in part, explains some of the general misconceptions associated with the performance of 'older' and 'younger' workers.

If, as suggested above, motivation is a significant aspect of work performance, how, if at all, does age impact upon work motivation? Slocum et al (1985) have suggested that the 'deadwood' image of older workers is attributable to the prevalence of low motivation among them. This raises an interesting issue of causal direction. Is it that, as Slocum et al (1985) would have us believe, low motivation leads to poor work performance which in turn leads to older workers being referred to as 'deadwood'? Or could it be that this kind of labelling and derogatory stereotyping is actually the source of low motivation? This raises questions about whether age-related assessments of work performance are physiological or a product of social construction.

2.7.2 Age and Stereotypical Images

Over the past four decades researchers have sought to establish the existence of stereotypical images of older and younger workers (see for example: Bird and Fisher, 1986; Hassell and Perrewe, 1993, 1995; Kirchner and Dunnette, 1954; Rhodes, 1983; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Waldman and Avolio, 1986). In particular, it has been argued that compared to their younger counterparts older workers are change resistant (Hayward et al, 1997), risk averse (Jerdee and Rosen, 1976a; Oswick 1991b), more difficult to train (IPM, 1993; Coulson-Thomas, 1991), and less motivated and ambitious (Craft et al, 1976; Doering et al, 1983).

Research on age stereotyping has tended to approach the subject in an unduly 'contained' and 'isolated' way. The problem of 'containment' arises out of the adoption of an ipsative style of enquiry where questions about stereotypes are presented to respondents on an 'either/or' basis. Inevitably, this overly constraining form of forced binary opposition can promote an inappropriate level of over-generalisation about the target group. Moreover, this kind of black and white logic also severely impedes the scope for exploring the relative intensity of stereotypes (e.g. strongly held views v. moderate ones). The 'isolation' problem is a product of a tendency to de-contextualise and almost 'laboratise' variables. Each aspect of age stereotyping is treated as if it were discrete. The possibility that certain stereotypical images might be interconnected or mutually implicated - such as 'change resistance'

and 'risk aversion' - is simply not addressed within the existing literature.

Do stereotypes change over time? This is an under-researched area with only two contributions of any real note. First, an attitudinal questionnaire about perceptions of older and younger workers was the administered by Institute of Personnel and Development to its members (IPD, 1993). The same questionnaire was used three years later by Lyon and Pollard (1997) in order to assess whether age stereotypes had changed. They concluded that there had been only very marginal shifts. However, the research method employed casts some serious doubts over their work. The most notable weakness being that they surveyed MBA students and not, as in the case of the earlier IPD sample, personnel practitioners. Consequently, rather than telling us something about 'changing attitudes' the results of this study might be said to more accurately reflect occupationally-based differences within two disparate cohorts.

The second, and more empirically robust, investigation has been provided by Bird and Fisher (1986) who replicated one of the earliest studies into age stereotyping (Kirchner and Dunnette, 1954) using exactly the same instrument with a comparable sample drawn from a similar manufacturing plant. They found that few changes had occurred in 30 years

If age stereotypes exist to what extent do they influence employment decisions? Jerdee and Rosen (1976a) examined the nature of job

related age stereotypes and concluded that older workers, when compared to younger workers, are perceived as being deficient in on-the-job performance, potential for development, vitality, and propensity of risk taking. Having identified these age stereotypes they proceeded to test whether they influenced managerial decisions.

In a laboratory study Jerdee and Rosen (1976b) used descriptions of fictitious employees and asked 142 participants to make simulated management decisions. They found that negative age bias influenced employment and promotion decisions. They summarised by stating that "the results confirmed the hypothesis that stereotypes regarding older employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional characteristics lead to discrimination against older workers."

The view that age stereotypes have an influential effect upon managerial decisions has not received universal acceptance. Rosen and Jerdee's findings have been challenged by Cleveland and Landy (1981a) who assessed the effect of age stereotypes upon performance ratings. They were unable to identify a correlation between age and the ratings awarded. However, it should be noted that the ratees were known by the raters, and this may have influenced the decisions reached. When recruitment and selection decisions are made the candidates are not usually well known by the recruiter.

Rosen and Jerdee concluded that the impact of age stereotypes upon performance judgements and ratings is generally over estimated. The findings in this study suggested that age preferences had not

been expressed. However, the authors were unable to draw the inference that this meant that the raters did not hold a stereotypical view of older workers; instead they could only conclude that age preferences had not been expressed in this particular instance. Cleveland and Landy (1983b) carried out a further examination of the influence of age stereotypes. On this occasion they analysed the effects of age stereotypes upon pay award and promotion decisions. Once again they concluded that the results did not demonstrate any significant relationship between age stereotypes and the decisions reached.

There is a body of literature concerned with the recruitment process that suggests younger workers are evaluated more favourably than older applicants (Avolio and Barrett, 1987; Craft et al, 1979; Haefner, 1977; Morrow et al, 1990; Singer and Sewell, 1989). Equally, other studies have found little or no evidence of a main effect attributable to applicant age (e.g. Cleveland, 1991; Cleveland and Hollman, 1990; Cleveland et al, 1988; Connor et al, 1978; Fusilier and Hitt, 1983; Locke-Connor and Walsh, 1980; Perry et al, 1996).

Overall, the research into the nature and existence of age stereotypes in employment is limited and evidence on the extent to which stereotypical images are connected to the enactment of age discrimination is also inconclusive. This seems to resonate with an observation made by Finkelstein et al:

> "In the applied psychology literature concerning age discrimination in employment decisions, stereotyping is usually suggested as a reason for age discrimination, although the specific stereotyping mechanisms believed to be operating are often not clearly delineated" (1995: 653).

2.8 Strategies for Addressing Age Prejudice

The published literature which considers mechanisms for addressing age prejudice and discrimination seems to subdivide into two main themes:

1. Work which concentrates upon highlighting the need for corrective action, and;

2. contributions that discuss the potential effectiveness of such measures.

It is also possible to classify the literature according to the particular strategies that are advocated. The main alternatives can be encapsulated within four categories: anti-discriminatory legislation, company initiatives, intervention by professional bodies, and re-education programmes. These categories will be used as a basis for reviewing the relevant literature in the area.

2.8.1 Age Based Legislation

A number of anti-ageist authors have indicated their support for the introduction of anti-ageist legislation as a means of combating overtly ageist behaviour in the workplace. One of the more common

arguments which is marshalled in favour of this solution is the successful operation of similar statutory measures in a number of other developed countries. Authors have drawn particularly upon the experiences of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) in the U.S. and the Human Rights Act (HRA) in Canada as models which exemplify the benefits of a legalistic approach (see for example; Jolly, Creigh & Mingay, 1979; Nicol, 1983; Rubenstein, 1989).

Notwithstanding the above, perceptions of the contribution, and relative effectiveness, of legislative measures such as the ADEA and the HRA have tended to be mixed. Faley and Kleiman (1985) have pointed to the technical difficulties of enforcement resulting from problems associated with the composition of the protected group, the scope of employment actions covered, and the existence of genuine exceptions. Similar operational difficulties have also been identified by Schachter and Dellaverson (1985) and Coleman (1985).

Tillsley (1990) suggests that despite the aforementioned problems the ADEA has still proved to be valuable. She comments:

> "The evidence from the U.S. is equivocal: despite statutory protection against age discrimination for over two decades, ageism still persists, as evidenced by the 27,000 complaints lodged in 1986. However, it is arguable that the legislative protection has led to a considerable reduction in the numbers of individuals affected."

Only limited empirical research into attitudes regarding the need for age legislation has been undertaken. A study provided by The Campaign For Work (1991) carried out interviews with 76 participants, all of whom were over 45 years old. It was found that just over half (56%) favoured the introduction of legislation. A more comprehensive analysis of views towards government intervention has been presented by Warr and Pennington (1993). In a survey of 1,140 IPM Members they asked respondents to indicate whether they favoured legislation, a voluntary government code, or no government action. The results according to areas of personnel activity are presented in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7 Views about Government Action Needed in Respect of various Age-related Personnel Practices

Personnel Practice	Intro. of Legis-lation	Government Voluntary Code	No Govern-ment Action Required
Recruitment	47%	43%	10%
Adverts:			
upper limits	39%	47%	14%
lower limits	25%	40%	35%
Training	38%	51%	11%
Promotion	36%	50%	14%
Retirement	20%	35%	45%

Source: Warr and Pennington (1993)

Warr and Pennington (1993) have also highlighted the arguments for and against legislation. These views can be summarised as follows:

In favour of legislation

* Makes explicit society's disapproval of morally unacceptable behaviour.

* Raises the issues to the same level of importance and public awareness as racism and sexism.

* Encourages shifts in attitudes by shaping aspects of publicly observable behaviour.

* More appropriate employment of older workers which benefits individuals and organisations, and the economy.

* Provides a source of influence for personnel and other staff to persuade colleagues to make decisions based on factors other than age.

* Enables older people to have recourse to legal support to fight ageism.

Against legislation

* Some parts of a legal framework are likely to be unenforceable.

* Some aspects of potential legislation in this area can be circumvented if one is so determined.

* Although overt behaviour may change, legislation is perhaps unlikely to affect deep-seated attitudes.

* Organisations are already subject to considerable legal constraints and further legislation would be restrictive and incur expense.

2.8.2 Corporate Initiatives

Coulson-Thomas (1989) has proposed a series of recommendations for corporate action to address ageism. He suggests that as a first step companies should review their position statements relating to sex and race discrimination to see whether age issues could be incorporated. He also calls upon organisations to instigate positive

programmes aimed at older workers, and to require managers to provide justification in instances where they specify age limits.

The proportion of companies which have taken an active interest in age discrimination is still relatively low, nevertheless, there are still some notable illustrations of good practice. For example, some local authorities have introduced phrases into their equal opportunities statements and job advertisements which indicate that existing and prospective employees will be treated in a fair and equitable manner regardless of their age. Action has also occurred in the private sector with articles appearing in the national press and reporting on a range of initiatives, such as recruitment drives which concentrate on encouraging older applicants. In particular, the initiatives by the Police Service, B & Q, Tesco, IBM and British Telecom have received a substantial amount of media attention (for further details see; Elliot, 1991; Kirkby, 1990; Smith, 1990; Summers, 1990).

It is perhaps necessary at this juncture to clarify a popular misconception regarding organisations which are taking positive action regarding age-related employment problems. The existence of corporate policies and programmes for tackling ageism do not in themselves mean that the organisation concerned does not discriminate on the grounds of age, but instead indicates that it acknowledges it as an issue worthy of attention and has therefore taken certain steps towards addressing it.

Several employment agencies have sought to re-educate and influence their corporate clients regarding the arbitrary use of age restrictions. Indeed, the Reed Employment Agency and the Brook Street Bureau have gone as far as producing extensive booklets for clients specifically aimed at discouraging ageism (Cornish, 1991; Gapper, 1989).

In a study based upon discussions held with personnel and line management staff in 19 organisations, The Policy Studies Institute investigated the repertoire of age-related policies and practices introduced by employers (Casey, Metcalf & Lakey, 1993). They found that; "Policies tend to be partial and, at times, contradictory." They went on to suggest that some employers were; "behaving in a reactive fashion and were responding, ad hoc, to external labour market changes."

Another study which examined the views expressed by employers has been provided by Marc Thompson (1991). His research explored the scope of policies aimed at older workers. A large sample of organisations (n = 436) were asked to "indicate what policies they were currently using, thinking of using or were not considering using to encourage the employment of older workers." The main results of this survey are presented overleaf in Table 2.8.

Having identified the distribution of views about policies Thompson went on to provide a framework for analysing policy actions. He considered whether particular policies are 'active' or 'supportive'

measures and whether they are 'externally' or 'internally' directed. Active policies can be described as those explicitly directed at older workers. Supportive policies are those which are not specifically directed at older workers but nevertheless may enhance their opportunities (i.e. the creation of more part-time jobs).

Table 2.8 Company Policies to Employ More Older Workers

Policies	% of Org-anisations
Encourage managers to recruit older workers	42
Raising the maximum recruitment age	33
More internal promotion for older workers	33
Use of selection tests in recruitment	28
Re-training programmes for older workers	24
Using press adverts to target older workers	24
Making retirement provisions more flexible	24
Designing more part-time jobs	23
Making working-time more flexible	22
Introducing/extending job-sharing	11
Changing rules governing pension eligibility	9
Making early retirement more difficult	3

Source: Thompson (1991)

Internal policy measures are aimed at existing older employees, while external policies attempt to target older potential employees who are outside of the organisation. Using this system of

classification, Thompson (1991) concludes that the proportions of internally and externally focused policies are fairly balanced. However, the greater majority of policies highlighted by employers tended to be supportive rather than active.

2.8.3 Professional Guidelines

Instances where professional bodies have taken a position regarding age discrimination are limited. Ironically, rather than challenging ageism, the policies and actions of some bodies seem to indicate that they condone it. For example, the grades of entry to membership of the Institute of Training and Development (ITD) prior to its merger with the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) were based on age rather than experience criteria.

The British Institute of Management (BIM) has firmly indicated it's view of age discrimination by commissioning and sponsoring the publication of an anti-ageist report (Coulson-Thomas, 1989). However, the most forceful and overt stand has been taken by the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD). The IPD has lead a well publicised campaign against the arbitrary use of age in employment and has published and circulated to all of it's members a booklet which outlines good practice (IPM, 1991). Overall, the contribution made by professional bodies in tackling ageism seems to lack direction and impetus. Consequently, even bodies opposed to ageism seem to have very little bearing on the actions of professionals or their employing organisations.

2.8.4 Educational Activities

There is a paucity of research which examines and compares the relative merits of re-education and other voluntarist initiatives against the potential effectiveness of legislation. It could be argued that it is difficult to assess the impact of the various approaches available for tackling ageism without first implementing them. However, perhaps comparative studies which draw upon the experiences in other areas of discrimination, such as race and gender, could provide transposable insights into the effects of enforcement and encouragement-based approaches.

An extensive review of the literature failed to identify any work which applied the aforementioned methodology. The literature available which considers the educational perspective tends to focus on providing speculative accounts of the limitations and/or the benefits of re-education programmes.

Authors have tended to present educative measures as being either an alternative to other courses of action or as being complimentary. For instance, the Institute of Personnel Management has stated:

> "The IPM recognises the enforcement value of anti-discrimination legislation. However, the Institute currently favours self regulation based on increased awareness and understanding of the business and personal reasons for not using age or age-related criteria in making decisions about people and work as this will help change attitudes which are at the basis of discriminatory behaviour". (IPM, 1991)

In a series of recommendations for eliminating age discrimination in employment the IPM (1991) goes on to advocate that organisations: "educate and train all staff, particularly those making employment decisions, about the business and human resource implications of age discrimination." By contrast, Metcalf and Thompson challenge the wisdom of concentrating on voluntary activities. They suggest that management re-education should form only one part of a larger package of measures which includes legislation.

2.9 Summary

The published research has addressed a wide range of issues related to age discrimination in employment. In particular, an extensive amount of work has been produced on the nature, prevalence and legitimacy of ageism. This research provides a basis for the development of the hypotheses which will be presented in the next part of this thesis (see Chapter 3).

There are two very clear inferences which can be drawn from the research on age discrimination. First, although commentators may disagree about the specific nature and severity of ageism, most have concluded that it is a very real and significant problem. Second, whether the research has focused upon recruitment and selection, promotion, training or redundancy decisions, one overwhelming feature arises: it is older workers (i.e., more than forty years old) who constitute the major disadvantaged age group.

In terms of the reasons offered by employers to support age preferences, the most common forms of justification are centred on the 'personal characteristics' associated with particular age groups and 'structural constraints' (e.g. succession planning, age balance and return on investment). Studies considering the legitimacy of these reasons - as genuine considerations or unwarranted generalisations - have proved to be somewhat inconclusive. Furthermore, the extent to which age-based stereotypes affect work-related decision making is also a point of contention among researchers. For some their findings indicate that they are highly influential while others conclude that their impact is generally over estimated.

Those who have investigated the various strategies for tackling age discrimination are necessarily starting from a position which assumes that it is a problem in need of resolution. As a result much of the work in this area has been concerned with justifying the need for action rather than providing more considered and balanced treatments of the alternatives and their respective merits. Implicit in much of this literature is an 'either/or logic' where a singular strategy is explored and the others possibilities are presented as marginal or competing. Not only is there a distinct lack of research which undertakes a structured comparison of the corrective and punitive measures available, but the scope for employing an amalgam of initiatives has also been ignored.

Finally, one major weakness in the body of research discussed here is the absence longitudinal studies. This is a notable area of omission. The neglect applies to both macro-level survey data on discrimination trends and firm-level research into continuity and change. Longitudinal research could help address a number of important, but until now unanswered, questions. These include: in what ways have the overall levels of age discrimination in employment increased, decreased or remained constant over the last several decades? How, if at all, have attitudes to age preferences changed over the years? Are there particular patterns to age prejudice? Do age stereotypes alter?

Chapter 3 - Research Hypotheses

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the hypotheses that this research project sets out to investigate. They are primarily derived from the survey of literature and secondary sources. The mechanism by which empirical research in a context such as this is developed is by endeavouring to formulate mutually exclusive and exhaustive hypotheses in the form of assertions about the "state of nature" (Green, Tull and Albaum, 1988) and then designing the research in such a way as to test the 'truth' of these assertions. The literature survey reported in chapter 2 provides evidence on which to base a number of assertions about age discrimination in employment.

The hypotheses under test in this thesis are contained, and subsequently presented, within four broad categories: those that relate to the existence and prevalence of age discrimination; those dealing with the nature of age stereotypes and age discrimination; those concerned with the reasons for, and patterns of, age preference; and, attitudes regarding the introduction and potential effectiveness of measures for tackling ageism.

3.2 "Prevalence and Continuity of Ageism" Hypotheses

The first hypothesis in this section is a relatively broad assertion regarding the existence of age discrimination in employment. This is

presented as a starting point for further more focused and detailed subsidiary hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 - Discrimination against employees, and prospective employees, on the grounds of age is a prevalent and significant problem in the workplace.

The precise quantification of age discrimination is in absolute terms difficult to ascertain, and therefore the word "prevalent" has been used to simply indicate that ageism is widespread. The use of "significant" refers to the intensity rather than pervasiveness of ageism. In suggesting that ageism is significant the intention is to assert that is has a 'substantial impact' insofar as it is a major factor in employment-related decision making (e.g. a critical variable in the selection/rejection of candidates in the recruitment process).

The literature review has produced considerable support for this hypotheses. Studies of both employers (as potential discriminators) and of younger and older people (as potential recipients of discrimination) have highlighted that discrimination on the grounds of age is prevalent (see for example: Arbose, 1982; Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1997; Branine and Glover, 1997; Hayward et at, 1997; Horn, 1988; Oswick, 1991b; Tavernier, 1979). Equally, past research has also highlighted that age discrimination has had a significant and detrimental impact upon older and younger workers with regards to employment related decision making such as:

recruitment and selection (Kiernan, 1981; Jolly et al, 1978; Lyon and Pollard, 1997); retention decisions (Trinder, 1989; Lazcko et al, 1988; Walker, 1990; Taylor and Walker, 1997); and, training and development opportunities (Coulson-Thomas, 1989; Vize, 1990; Lazcko and Lee, 1990; Metcalf and Thompson, 1990)

In addition to providing a basis for the opening hypothesis regarding the existence of ageism, past research has offered some insights into the pattern of discrimination. This enabled a further three subsidiary hypotheses to be formulated:

Hypothesis 1a - The overall level of overt age discrimination in employment related decision making has decreased over time.

Hypothesis 1b - The overall level of covert age discrimination in employment-related decision making has increased over time.

Hypothesis 1c - The overall level of age prejudice among employers has remained static over time.

Here overt ageism is seen as direct, and explicit discrimination, while covert ageism is less obvious, indirect and far more subtle. One of the most popular measures of overt ageism has been the specification of age limits in job advertisements. The synthesis of past job advertisements studies presented earlier (see table 2.1)

points to a decline in this form of overt discrimination. As pointed out in the review of literature, these studies offer a series of 'heterogeneous snapshots' of age discrimination and therefore need to be interpreted with caution. Although in themselves these studies constitute weak evidence of a blatantly ageist practice they still, nevertheless, provide sufficient inferences to warrant a positively loaded hypothesis (hypothesis 1a) regarding the continuity of overt age discrimination.

The rationale for hypothesis 1b is inextricably linked to that offered for hypothesis 1c. In one sense hypothesis 1c is a form of 'null hypothesis' insofar as there is no longitudinal studies or discernible differences across studies (see for example: Trinder, 1989; Lyon and Pollard, 1997) to suggest that there has been a shift in the attitudes towards, or changes in first hand experiences of, older and/or younger workers.

If, as hypothesis 1c asserts, no discernible points of discontinuity or changes to age prejudice have been identified during the past few decades, how does this fit with past research on the decline in overt discrimination and hypothesis 1a? If overt discrimination has decreased but the overall levels of prejudice - along with other outcome measures of discrimination (such as employment and retention rates, workforce profiling) - have not altered then one explanation is that there has been a shift from overt forms of age discrimination to more subtle and less obvious ones. For instance, instead of expressing age preferences in job advertisements may be

employers are screening out either older or younger applicants at the shortlisting stage. This would result in the same outcome, (the proportion of older and younger people being disadvantaged in employment remains unaltered) but by a different process (through indirect rather than direct means). Hence, hypothesis 1b is based upon the assertion that a reduction in overt age discrimination has lead to a concomitant increase in covert forms of age discrimination given that there is gap between the well documented decline of overt ageism by employers (see section 2.4.1) and the stable picture of 'prevalent ageism' painted by the body of research which looks at 'the disadvantaged' (see section 2.4.3). The most likely explanation, and the one which is tested via the aforementioned hypotheses, is that rather than *declining,* ageism is instead *changing.* In short, it is posited that there has been a shift away from overt age discrimination and towards more subtle and sophisticated forms of discrimination.

3.3. "Nature of Ageism" Hypotheses

The hypotheses contained in this section can be sub-divided into three main areas: the nature of the disadvantaged, the nature of age stereotypes, and the nature of discriminators.

3.3.1. Disadvantaged Groups

A common feature of research findings on age discrimination is that it is both younger and older workers who are consistently disadvantaged (Naylor, 1987b; Slater, 1973; Kiernan, 1981) . Most of the studies which attempt to isolate and examine 'disadvantaged

age groups' take as their point of comparison 'advantaged groups' (see section 2.3.3. for examples). This limits the scope for making either structured or systematic comparisons between older and younger workers as two distinctly separate, but similarly disadvantaged, groups. As a consequence it is difficult to meaningfully distinguish between the nature and relative severity of disadvantage. Nevertheless, at an aggregated level, and as a set of cumulative insights, research into the age-based perceptions of workers indicates that images of older workers are generally more prevalent and derogatory than those associated with younger workers (Bird and Fisher, 1986; Bolton et al, 1989: Bytheway, 1995: Lyon and Pollard, 1997: Glover and Branine, 1997; Hayward et al, 1997). This has informed the following hypothesis.

> **Hypothesis 2 - The attitudes towards, and perceptions of older workers (over 45 years old) held by employers are more negative than those held of younger workers (under 35 years old).**

3.3.2. Age Stereotypes

The discussion of age stereotypes contained in the earlier review of literature (see section 2.6.2.) has demonstrated that there are a range of stereotypical images associated with older and younger workers. However, several gaps were identified within the existing literature. In particular, it was argued that past research had not produced meaningful insights into the relative intensity of various positive and negative age-based perceptions. Nor had it explored the

extent too which particular stereotypes might be interconnected or part of a more complex pattern of causation. Hence, hypotheses 3 and 4 seek to tackle the issue of whether or not there is an underlying pattern or cluster of stereotypical images which form meta-stereotypes of older and younger workers.

Hypothesis 3 - There is a cluster of stereotypical attributes associated with older workers.

Hypothesis 4 - There is a cluster of stereotypical attributes associated with younger workers.

A further aspect of engaging in research into age stereotypes thrown up by the review of literature is the extent to which the images generated are enduring and have continuity over time. As suggested earlier, this is an under-researched area. Only the studies by Lyon and Pollard (1997) and Bird and Fisher (1986) have provided longitudinal insights, albeit limited ones. In both of these replication studies the conclusion reached by the researchers was that few changes had occurred to age stereotypes over time. The final hypothesis pertaining to age stereotyping is therefore:

Hypothesis 5 - Stereotypical images of older and younger workers are relatively stable and do not substantially alter over time.

3.3.3 The Characteristics of Discriminators

The hypotheses outlined in this section are intended to provide a basis for investigating the connection between various 'demographic factors', and the propensity to discriminate on the basis of age. One central objective is to answer Schonfield's important, but largely side-stepped, question: "Who is stereotyping whom?" (1982:270). Here the relevance of gender, industrial sector, size of organisation, occupational grouping and, the actual age of the employer, as independent variables is considered.

Festinger's (1954) 'social comparison' theory of discrimination - which is critiqued in greater detail earlier (see section 2.3) - suggests that prejudice and discrimination arise out of comparisons of oneself and ones 'own reference group' with someone else in another group. In making comparisons one's own group is used as a positive reference point. This 'own group/different group' perspective seems to explicitly resonate with the conventional patterns of discrimination that prevail in society: men discriminate against women; white people discriminate against black people; the able bodied discriminate against those with disabilities; heterosexuals discriminate against homosexuals; and so on. Accordingly, we might, as a reasonable starting point, presume that age discrimination would follow the same pattern: An employer would be inclined to form positive images of employees located in the same age band (as himself/herself) and where there was a propensity to discriminate it would be directed towards those employees outside of the employer's own age group. This can be stated as:

Hypothesis 6 - The nature of the stereotypical image formed of younger and older workers is associated with the chronological age of the stereotyper.

This hypothesis can be disaggregated into two sub-hypotheses, namely:

Hypothesis 6a - Older employers have a more stereotypical view of, and negative attitude towards, younger workers than younger employers.

Hypothesis 6b - Younger employers have a more stereotypical view of, and negative attitude towards, older workers than older employers.

There is some limited evidence to support the claim that differences exist between public sector and private sector employers in terms of ageism. Naylor (1978a) and Tillsley (1990) have demonstrated that private sector employers are far more likely to specify age limits in job advertisements. Equally, Oswick (1991a) has shown that local authorities have taken the lead on developing anti-ageist employment policies and procedures. As a consequence of this research, and in the absence of any contradictory findings, our 'sector hypothesis' can be stated as:

Hypothesis 7 - The industrial sector within which an employer is located *is* associated with the age stereotypical views they hold and their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

In the absence of any rigorous, empirically grounded research which establishes any connection between either gender, size of organisation, occupational group and ageism, there is insufficient support to make any positively skewed statements about these factors. Therefore, the following are couched as null hypotheses:

Hypothesis 8 - The gender of an employer *is not* associated with either the age stereotypical views they hold or their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

Hypothesis 9 - The size of organisation within which an employer is located *is not* associated with the age stereotypical views they hold and their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

Hypothesis 10 - The occupational grouping to which an employer belongs *is not* associated with either the age stereotypical views they hold or their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

3.4. "Reasons for Ageism" Hypotheses

Slater (1973) has produced the most comprehensive study of the reasons given by employers in support of age preferences and bias. From his survey of 500 employers, who had specified age limits in their job advertisements, he developed a four-part classification of justifications, namely: 'personal reasons' - where the focal point is the individual (e.g. intrinsic abilities and personal circumstances); 'structural reasons' - factors concerning the employing organisation (e.g. age balance and succession planning); 'work reasons' - characteristics of the task (e.g. nature of the job and aspects of the work environment); and, 'other reasons' - miscellaneous legitimations not covered by any of the aforementioned categories (e.g. age limits used only as a guide rather than for the purposes of exclusion or for filtering applicants). Slater found that 'personal reasons' and 'structural reasons' were by far the most commonly cited responses (49% and 42% of instances, respectively).

In a replication study two years later, Collins (1975) results correlated with those derived by Slater: 'personal reasons' (at 47%) and 'structural reasons' (at 32%) featured as the most popular explanations offered by employers. A more detailed exposition and critique of Slater's and Collins' work can be found in section 2.5 of the Literature Review.

For our purposes, this work provides sufficient grounds on which to base hypotheses regarding the reasons given the enactment of ageism. The statements to be tested in this area are:

Hypothesis 11 - The perceptions held regarding the abilities, characteristics and personal constraints of older and younger workers is the *most significant* reason why employers discriminate against employees (and prospective employees) on the grounds of age.

Hypothesis 12 - Organisational needs and structural factors are *highly significant* reasons why employers discriminate against employees (and prospective employees) on the grounds of age.

Hypothesis 13 - The demands of a job and the nature of the work environment are *relatively insignificant* reasons why employers discriminate against employees (and prospective employees) on the grounds of age.

Finally, given the degree of temporal consistency between the findings reached in the studies by Slater in 1973 and those derived by Collins in 1975, it seems reasonable to expect that the reasons cited by employers for discriminating on the basis of age are fairly fixed and enduring. Hence the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 14 - The reasons offered in support of age preferences are relatively stable and do not substantially alter over time.

3.5. "Anti-ageist Measures" Hypotheses

A further area for analysis in this thesis is to assess the effectiveness of the various corrective measures available to combat ageism. This involves not only reviewing the initiatives currently employed, it also requires an evaluation of those which are advocated by certain stakeholders, such as anti-ageist legislation. In this regard this strand of the thesis has both reflective and speculative elements to it. As a broad starting point, the opening hypothesis in this section is:

> **Hypothesis 15 - The *majority* of employers view ageism as *less* socially unacceptable than either racism and sexism.**

There is no direct and unequivocal evidence to support this hypothesis, however, the level of indirect support that can be gleaned from the actions of employers and institutional practices is compelling. In particular, the limited introduction of proactive measures by firms (Branine and Glover, 1997; Casey et al, 1993; McDonald and Potton, 1997), the high levels of blatant age discrimination that persist in organisations (Metcalf and Thompson, 1990; Tillsley, 1990; Trinder, 1989; Hayward et al, 1997) and the willingness of managers to admit and defend age preferences (Bytheway, 1995; Taylor and Walker, 1993, 1997; Warr and Pennington, 1993) all bear testimony to the relative social significance of ageism when compared to racism and sexism.

Although ageism may not have the share the intensity of feeling associated with some other forms of discrimination, it is still nevertheless widely viewed as a problem by employers. In a survey of a large sample of personnel practitioners, Warr and Pennington (1993) found that more than two-thirds of respondents favoured some form of government intervention (i.e. legislation or a voluntary code). On the basis of this 'pro-measures stance' the following hypothesis is posited:

> **Hypothesis 16 - The *majority* of employers support the implementation of measures aimed at combating unfair discrimination on the grounds of age.**

Views about the form that measures should take are rather mixed. Warr and Pennington's (1993) study showed that respondents (n = 1,140) marginally favoured legislation over a voluntary code (47% versus 43%) to cover recruitment and selection activities, but for training, promotion and retirement decisions the positions were reversed with voluntary measures proving more popular (see table 2.7 for full details). More recently, corroboration for the overall popularity of voluntarist approaches has come from a study provided by Hayward et al (1997). They found that 74% out of 514 personnel practitioners they surveyed favoured voluntary approaches to minimising age discrimination. It should be noted that these two studies take a slightly difference perspectives on voluntaristic measures: Warr and Pennington favoured the introduction of a 'voluntary government code' as an alternative to legislation while

Hayward et al interpreted the idea of 'voluntary approaches' in a broader and more encompassing sense to include organisationally lead initiatives. The subtle differences in emphasis between these research projects may account for the more enthusiastic support for voluntary action in the latter study. Notwithstanding these etymological differences, both studies affirm the widespread support for voluntaristic action or, to be more precise, for 'non-legislative' measures. Therefore, a further 'measure specific' refinement to hypothesis 16 has been formulated:

> **Hypothesis 17 - Of the approaches available for tackling age discrimination the *greater proportion* of employers favour the development of voluntary measures.**

Many writers have argued that, of the voluntary measures available, re-education (Thompson, 1991; Coulson-Thomas, 1989;) and other proactive initiatives such as positive discrimination in favour of older workers (Elliot, 1991; Gapper, 1989; Cornish, 1991; Kirkby, 1990) are crucial to addressing ageism. Equally, Casey et al (1993) in a study of 19 organisations found that other less direct actions - which typically took the form of company-based policies and procedures pertaining to ageism - were often inconsistent, reactive and largely ineffectual. Therefore, in response to these findings a further variation on hypothesis 16 can be produced:

Hypothesis 18 - Formal company policies and professional guidelines are seen by employers as potentially having only a *limited impact* upon addressing age discrimination within the workplace.

Finally, in terms of identifying and prioritising the areas of employment decision-making where anti-ageist measures should be applied, two significant and independent sources of data have been produced. First, Warr and Pennington's (1993) analysis of areas where managers feel action is needed (see table 2.7) highlighted that most respondents supported action (i.e. legislation or voluntary approaches) aimed at 'recruitment' (90%), which in turn was closely followed by 'training' (89%) and 'promotion' (86%), with 'retirement' (55%) being a significantly less favoured option.

Second, Thompson's (1991) work contains some interesting parallels. He asked employers (n = 436): "What policies are you currently using or thinking of using to encourage the employment of older workers?" (1991: 27). Of the 12 policies identified (see table 2.8 for full details), the top six related to recruitment, promotion and training, with "encouraging managers to recruit older workers" being the most heavily cited at 42%. By contrast, retirement and various retention-related initiatives (i.e. part-time working, flexible contracts and job sharing) appeared in the bottom half of the measures advocated, with "making retirement more difficult " as the least popular policy at just 3%.

Both of the aforementioned studies share a similar hierarchical pattern ranging from well supported recruitment-based measures through to less favoured initiatives connected with retirement. Hence, hypotheses 18 and 19 are as follows:

> **Hypothesis 19 - The recruitment and selection process is seen as the area of employment decision-making where age-based corrective measures are *most* required.**

> **Hypothesis 20 - Retirement and redundancy are seen as the areas of employment decision-making where age-based corrective measures are *least* required.**

3.6. Summary

This chapter has sought to develop testable hypotheses about age discrimination in employment. In order to build up a picture of, and develop fresh perspectives on, ageism the hypotheses presented here are explicitly designed to extend the nature of our understanding of this particular form of discrimination. It should however be stressed that the four main groupings within which the hypotheses are organised should not construed as discrete pockets of variables to be investigated in isolation. It is possible, if not probable, that these domains of enquiry are overlapping and/or mutually implicated. Therefore, as well as testing the hypotheses contained in this chapter, this thesis also seeks to examine the extent to which there

are connections between facets of ageism and relationships between particular hypotheses.

Aspects of the general methodological approach used - along with details of the specific methods employed to operationalise and test the stated hypotheses - are discussed in the next chapter (chapter 4).

Chapter 4 - Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Kane (1985) has compared the research process to fishing and suggests that research techniques are like fishing flies: "you choose the right one for the fish you want to catch." This metaphor succinctly encapsulates the primary purpose of this chapter: to describe and justify 'the choice of flies'. Put in more direct terms, the intention is to provide a series of systematic and coherent explanations for the decisions taken about data gathering and analysis.

The following section outlines the general methodological approach adopted. This broad discussion provides a framework for the subsequent, and more detailed, consideration of the three specific research methods employed. In each instance this incorporates coverage of: the composition of samples; the design and administration of research instruments; and the techniques used to analyse data.

4.2 The Methodological Approach

There is a plethora of classifications of methodological approaches within the research literature, most of which fail to offer comprehensive insights into the range of alternatives available. For example, Bynner and Stribley (1979) identify three broad styles of research: experimental, survey and ethnographic. They are unclear about where the analysis of secondary data sources fits in. Similar

omissions exist in the repertoire of approaches described by Dixon et al (1987), Langley (1987) and Bulmer (1984). The more informative classifications are those which incorporate some consideration of the point of application. For example, Green et al (1988) have produced a four-part classification which emphasises the point of data collection as being the major distinguishing feature between approaches:

1. Gathering from secondary sources.
2. Gathering from respondents.
3. Gathering from experiments.
4. Gathering from simulation by modelling.

Equally, Miller (1991) offers a robust classification based upon the research locale, namely: library-based, laboratory-based and field-based.

The research approach adopted in this thesis has two main strands. The first could best be described as hermeneutic or documentary in nature, it is 'library-based' and involves gathering 'data from secondary sources.' The second utilises the survey method insofar as it is 'field-based' and 'gathers data from respondents'. The latter consists of two separate and distinct surveys.

4.2.1 The Case for Surveys and Secondary Data

The 'laboratory-based' (Miller, 1991), or 'experimental' (Bynner and Stribley, 1979), approach to data gathering has been ruled out as a

practical and valid means of testing the stated research hypotheses. This conclusion has been reached on the basis of two major drawbacks. First, and foremost, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to control a sufficient number of the multiplicity of variables that come into play with a relatively ambiguous and complex social phenomenon such as age discrimination. As Dixon et al (1987) point out: "The fundamental requirement of an experimental design is that the researcher has some control over variation in the independent variable and is able to control the influence of other variables" (p. 124).

Second, the extent to which 'subjects' - assuming it were possible to get an adequate number of participants - would respond in an 'honest' and 'natural' way is seriously brought into question. Particularly, given the sensitive and emotive nature of the subject matter and an environment which is overtly contrived. The degree of experimenter control required in order to manipulate dependent variables is at a price: "The cost of control is often to reduce validity as the situation can be reduced to artificiality" (Shipman, 1988: 94).

An alternative to the remoteness of the laboratory and the artificiality of the experiment is the 'realness' offered by ethnography. This form of enquiry, according to Shipman (1988: 37), takes us "out of the laboratory, away from surveys designed in offices and from questionnaires and interviews derived from preconceived models, and into the field to observe, listen and interpret." In many ways the sort of participant observation demanded by ethnography

offers considerable scope for studying age discrimination in an organisational setting. Indeed, Fielding's (1981) study of the National Front has demonstrated how ethnography can generate valuable insights into the nature and enactment of discrimination.

The rejection of the ethnographic approach is less to do with the intrinsic strengths and limitations of the approach and is more concerned with the level and type of analysis it permits. Like the 'case study method' (Yin, 1994), ethnographic research usually takes a single organisation (or occasionally a discrete cluster of organisations) as the unit of analysis (see for example: Ditton, 1977; Mars, 1982; Watson, 1995). This highlights the distinction that Harre (1979) draws between what he describes as 'intensive' and 'extensive' research. The kind of micro-level analysis provided by ethnography can be regarded as 'intensive', insofar as it enables the researcher to gather a substantial level of data (normally qualitative) from a fairly limited sample (Kane, 1985; Langley, 1987; Miles and Huberman, 1994). By contrast, 'extensive' research gathers limited amounts of data from large samples and often, but not necessarily, involves the application of statistical techniques.

The hypotheses, as presented in Chapter 3, seem to more readily lend themselves to investigation using an 'extensive' research methodology. Most notably, it would prove difficult to draw reliable inferences about the overall prevalence of age discrimination in employment (see hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c), or isolate generalisable trends and patterns of ageism (hypotheses 5, 6a, 6b, 7, 8, 9, and 10),

using either participant or non-participant observation or the case study method. The scope for representatively capturing employers' attitudes toward the introduction of anti-ageist measures (hypotheses 15, 16, 17,18, 19 and 20), other than via surveys, is also rather limited.

The preference for survey-based research, and de facto a quantitative methodology, which is unfolding does not reflect a privileging of this form of analysis as better than the qualitative alternatives. Instead, it should merely be seen as more closely aligned to the stated aims of thesis and the hypotheses developed in the previous chapter. This is consistent with Silverman's observation that:

> ".....the choice between different research methods can depend upon quite pragmatic matters. For instance, if you want to discover how people intend to vote, then a quantitative method, like a social survey, may seem the most appropriate choice. On the other hand, if you are concerned with exploring people's wider perceptions or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be favoured" (1997: 12).

It is not by chance that surveys are the most widely used method for collecting data within the social sciences (Bulmer, 1984; Edwards et al, 1997; Fowler, 1993). The relative efficiency (in terms of cost and effort) with which large volumes of data can be captured and manipulated makes them extremely attractive to many researchers (Edwards et al, 1997). More importantly, by using the survey method a statistically significant number of direct sources can be identified to form the basis of the sample and a representative cross-section of participants can also be incorporated. In effect, this

enables the problems of sample size and content to be overcome at the sample design stage (Fowler, 1993; Kalton, 1983).

In the interests of balance, it is important to acknowledge that social surveys, in common with all other research methods, have their weaknesses. Oppenheim, in his seminal work on questionnaire design, notes that surveys have been widely criticised for "their reduced ability to control important variables, for following events rather than making them happen, and for their inability to prove causal relationships" (1966: 7).

For others the failings of the survey method are more epistemological than simply methodological. Marsh (1982, 1984) contends that surveys are too positivistic and, elsewhere, she warns of "the ever-present danger of artefacts, and the question creating the response rather than 'eliciting' it" (1979: 67). The etymological problems of the 'indeterminacy and undecideability of meaning' (Derrida, 1979) of words, and thus survey questions, is raised by Cicourel (1964). This line of criticism is further amplified by Taylor (1978), who challenges the legitimacy of treating as data "the subjective reality of individuals' beliefs, attitudes, values, as attested by their responses to certain forms of words"(p. 87). And, he goes on to assert that questionnaire items fail to apprehend "social reality as characterised by intersubjective and common meanings" (p.87).

The methodological problems with the survey method, discussed above, cannot be simply dismissed or disregarded. However, the

shortcomings of this approach, as with those associated with the alternatives, should be regarded as limiting factors rather than fatal flaws. For example, the fact that it is not possible to isolate causation with absolute certainty - due to the inability to control and manipulate the dependent, independent and extraneous variables - is off set by the inherent advantages this approach has over the artificiality of experimentation.

The notion that etymological difficulties render the survey method invalid and unusable needs to be eschewed. This view can be rigorously challenged on two fronts. First, the problems of etymology, and more generally positivism, are not limited to surveys they are manifest in all forms of empirical research. In short, these problems are inevitable and unavoidable. Second, and more fundamentally, we risk slipping into an absurd and endless form of postmodern relativism if we do not accept that meaning has a degree of negotiated stability and is socially bounded. As Marsh (1984) puts it: "...the meaning of some words has to be assumed *a priori* as unproblematic so that the meaning of others may be discussed, in order that the 'hermeneutic cycle' may be broken" (p. 99).

An alternative, and more moderate, interpretation of the 'anti-positivist/anti-survey' position is that rather than presenting an insurmountable obstacle, the philosophical concerns regarding the survey method are actually valuable insofar as they can be viewed as having a sensitising effect. They encourage the researcher to step back from the survey and adopt a different perspective which can

guide and inform the research design. This increased awareness helps to highlight: the potential for ambiguity in question formation; the need for caution in interpreting results; the problems with definitive 'truth claims'; and, the influence of the researcher on the research.

Having examined the arguments for the use of the survey method, it may be helpful to briefly explore the strengths and limitations of incorporating secondary data sources. In this thesis the specific form of secondary source that is being enlisted is documentary data. There are a number of problems associated with using recorded information. Shipman (1973) warns that: "The distance between document and reality, and the number of interpretations involved have to be considered in interpreting documentary evidence" (p. 108). Reliability of information may not be the only problem to contend with when collecting documentary evidence. Another major problem area can be the accessibility and format of the documentation (Stewart and Kamins, 1993). Access problems can occur because it is difficult to locate the document(s), or possibly because of limited or restricted access. The format of document can also be an obstacle where to the manner in which it is structured and presented is not entirely compatible with the requirements for research purposes.

The type of documentary analysis used in this thesis involves the sampling of job advertisements. In this instance the problems of access to information and the format of text are not significant constraints. Equally, the hermeneutic problems of interpreting

meaning from text are minimised by the straightforwardness of the 'content analysis' (Holsti, 1969) employed. This latter issue will be discussed at greater length in section 4.3.

One of the major benefits of documentary sources is that as 'unobtrusive measures' (Webb et al, 1966), they compliment the survey method. Moreover, unlike other targets of research activity, documents are not generally susceptible to being contaminated by the intervention of the researcher. As Shipman comments:

> The advantage of documents as sources of evidence is that they have been compiled for other purposes than to provide information for social scientists or historians. They can be assumed to be a reflection of feelings undisturbed by the presence of the researcher. (1988: 113-114).

It is to the issues of complimentarity and corroboration of research methods that we now turn our attention.

4.2.2 Towards Triangulation and Longitudinal Insights

The term 'triangulation' was originally developed by Campbell and Fiske (1959) to refer to situations where "a hypothesis can survive the confrontation of a series of complimentary methods of testing." The concept of triangulation is borrowed from orienteering where it describes the process of finding out where you are by taking bearings from two landmarks in order to locate oneself at their intersection (Fielding and Fielding, 1986). Bloor (1997) has claimed that the

term has been abused by uncritical usage and too much attention on the 'between-method' (Denzin, 1989) version of triangulation.

According to Denzin (1970), there are four types of research triangulation. First, and most typically embraced, there is *methodological triangulation*, where two variants exist: 'between-method' approaches, when two or more methods are applied to the same subject in explicit relation to each other, and 'within-method' approaches, when the same method is used on more than one occasion. Second, *investigator triangulation* refers to studies where two or more researchers examine the same situation with a degree of independence at the data gathering stage. Third, *data triangulation* encompasses: (1) 'time triangulation' - exploring temporal influences by longitudinal and cross-sectional designs; (2) 'space triangulation' - taking the form of comparative research; and (3) 'person triangulation' - variously at the individual level, the group level, and the collective level. Finally, *theory triangulation* examines a situation from the standpoint of competing theories.

The primary form of triangulation contained in this thesis is the 'between-method' approach. By using the survey to gather data on attitudes towards age discrimination and documentary sources to identify the incidents of age discrimination in job advertisements we have two complimentary measures. One which is attitudinal (survey method), and therefore espoused, and the other which is behavioural insofar as age limits in job advertisements constitute a form of operationalised age preferences. In short, this form of triangulation

enables us to test certain hypotheses from two perspectives: what is said (the survey method) and what is done (documentary sources).

A second form of triangulation will also become apparent in this thesis. The use of the same attitudinal survey at two different points in time (see section 4.4 for more details) permits us to explore temporal influences by longitudinal design which is consistent with Denzin's description of the 'time-based' variant of *data triangulation.*

Triangulation is rooted in a multi-strategy research philosophy and as such it has some clear benefits over more singular-type research designs (Campbell, 1969). As Fielding and Fielding (1986) succinctly put it: "The essence of the triangulation rationale is the fallibility of any single measure as a representation of social phenomena and psychological constructs" (p.29). Triangulation as an approach is not without some limitations, the most significant of which is the validity of the match between research designs and the data generated - a problem which Bloor (1997) rather amusingly refers to as one of "replicating chalk with cheese" (p.38). We therefore need to be careful not "to adopt a naively 'optimistic' view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:199).

Within the review of past work on age discrimination (see chapter 2) one of the most significant gaps identified in the literature was the paucity of research which examined the subject over time. The

absence of meaningful longitudinal insights is something which this thesis seeks to rectify. The framing of hypotheses - regarding trends in overt and covert age discrimination (hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c), the temporal stability of both age stereotypes (hypothesis 5), and the unchanging nature of reasons offered for age preferences (hypothesis 14) - demands that both the surveying of the attitudes of employers and the documentary analysis of job advertisements embrace a longitudinal perspective. Details of the ways in which the research activity attempts to fulfil this particular requirement are provided in the subsequent discussion of the specific research techniques employed.

4.3 The Documentary Analysis of Trends

In the review of literature the popularity of job advertisement sampling as a means of revealing overt age discrimination was identified. It demonstrated that there were many studies which had provided 'one-off snapshots' of the citation of age limits in job advertisements (see table 2.1.) However, it has proved difficult to draw reliable inferences regarding trends in age discrimination from these sources due to the modest size, and disparate composition of, the samples used and the varying methods of classification employed.

The documentary analysis contained in this thesis also relies on the analysis of the job advertisements. However, unlike previous studies, it has taken a very large sample of advertisements over an extended period of time using a highly standardised method of

interpretation and classification. The reliability of the results is also enhanced by ensuring that the samples gathered are matched.

Arguably, viewing the incidence of age restricted job advertisements as an indicator of an employer's preference for applicants of a certain age group constitutes a sound basis for the analysis. However, we need to bear in mind that factors other than an employer's preference can influence the use of limits in job advertisements. The obvious source being institutional requirements over which managers are unable to exercise any discretion (e.g. upper age bars for entry to the Armed Services) and statutory age restrictions (e.g. legally employees have to be at least 18 years of age in order to do shiftwork). In examining job advertisements these constraints cannot be entirely disregarded; however, there are likely to be only a very limited number of circumstances where the employers control is usurped in terms of the specification of age.

The form of job advertisement sampling undertaken in this thesis is primarily geared towards testing the 'prevalence and continuity of ageism' hypotheses outlined earlier in section 3.2. However, as an integral part of the process of research triangulation the job advertisement initiative also provides a supplementary means of testing hypotheses 7 and 10, and to a slightly lesser extent hypotheses 1b and 15. The way in which the analysis of job advertisements lends itself to cross-examining 'characteristics of discriminators' hypotheses is discussed under the subsequent

headings of 'data gathering and classification' (section 4.3.2) and 'data analysis' (section 4.3.3).

4.3.1. The Sample of Job Advertisements

The sample comprises of job advertisements appearing in *The Guardian* newspaper between 1961 and 1992. In each of these years the job advertisements placed during the first week of March have been included. In all, the sample contains 21,085 separate job advertisements which represent a mean sample of 659 advertisements for each of the 32 years surveyed. The first week in March was taken to obviate the potential effect of seasonal fluctuations and trends in the composition and volume of advertisements, albeit that these sorts of occupational variations are unlikely to have a dramatic impact upon age discriminatory practice. It seems reasonable to assume that those who discriminate on the basis of age invariably do so all year round. At the very least, taking the same week each year enables the potential for seasonal variance to be controlled.

The Guardian was selected on the basis of several criteria. First, it is a well known national newspaper with an established circulation. Second, it has been published for many years and therefore enables a longitudinal sample in excess of 30 years to be gathered. Third, *The Guardian* offers more than it's competitors in terms of the volume of job advertisements that appear per week. Finally, in addition to volume advantages, it also publishes a wider range of white collar vacancies than the alternative publications available.

Inevitably, the make-up of the total advertisements sample (n = 21,085) reflects the patterns of advertising that we find in the national press generally. In particular, the advertisements are positively skewed towards well-paid white collar positions. The prohibitive costs of advertising in the national press means that unskilled and semi-skilled manual jobs and lower level clerical and administrative vacancies are more typically placed using other media (e.g. local press, recruitment agencies and job centres).

4.3.2. Data Gathering and Classification

Data were collected from The British Newspaper Library where the past copies of all national, and most local, newspapers are kept. *The Guardian* is held on microfilm which dictates that data had to be collected in situ. This had implications for the research design; the option of photocopying samples of advertisements from a 'hard copy' (i.e. the original newspaper) and undertaking a sophisticated form of 'discourse analysis' (see for example, Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Fairclough, 1995) at a later stage was effectively circumvented.

The accessibility of the data and the problems associated with interpreting documentary sources discussed earlier lead to the adoption of a simple form of 'content analysis' which is in line with Dixon et al's description of the technique:

> "Content analysis is very much like an observation study. In a content analysis a checklist is developed to count how frequently certain ideas, words, phrases, images or scenes

> appear. It is like an observation study, but what is being observed is a text, or a film or television programme" (1987:95).

The most critical question which precedes the content analysis relates to the notion of a checklist: what criteria are going to be used to capture and classify the expression of age preferences?

Age preferences can be measured in two distinctly different ways. First, only advertisements which contain a direct and explicit reference to the age of prospective candidates are counted as expressing a preference, e.g. late thirties, 25 to 35, over 40. Second, the alternative is to count not only the explicit citation of age, but also to incorporate more implicit references (e.g. where an advertisement asks for a "mature person" or a "dynamic highflyer"). Clearly, the latter examples of terminology are ambiguously framed. For example, does 'mature' refer to an inherent personality trait or to chronological status?

Here it has been decided that the criterion for classification will be explicit age reference. 'Explicit' is taken to mean instances where there is a clear 'numerical component' to the statement. This is designed to include direct reference to upper and lower age bars, age ranges, and phrases such as 'mid-twenties', 'early thirties', etc. In short, only when an advertisement specifically mentions age in quantifiable terms will it be counted as a preference. This decision has been taken for three main reasons.

First, the inclusion of implied age references would make the process far too subjective - the problem of multiple readings and accurately interpreting the authors intent from such a limited volume of text are insurmountable. Second, and more pragmatically, the sheer size of the sample taken means that the sort of qualitative interpretation demanded by the assessment of implied preferences would be extremely time consuming when weighed against the limited richness and reliability of the outcome. Thirdly, given the more covert and subtle nature of these implied forms of age preference, they are better investigated using other research techniques.

Although concentrating on the direct citation of age offers a fairly high degree of objectivity, a further aspect of classification needs to be considered. Should the content analysis seek to classify the citation into sub-categories of age preference according to either the age group it favours or disadvantages? For example, should a job advertisement which states "the successful applicant is likely to be over 25 years of age", be treated as disadvantaging everyone under 25 yrs old and as favouring a 26 year old as much as it does a 59 year old? Equally, should the use of the word 'likely' in the above example be construed as having the same intent as if it were substituted for 'must'?

Clearly, the use a documentary source such as job advertisements does not permit us to draw elaborate insights into the motives of employers. As suggested earlier, the intention of this technique is to test hypotheses related to the existence and extent of age

discrimination rather to explore its nature (which is the basis of other hypotheses to be tested using other research methods.) Hence, a simple dichotomous form of classification was utilised: is an age preference cited - yes or no? Two further problems of classification arose during a pilot study comprising of two days of job advertisements contained in *The Guardian* (one day taken from 1972 and the other from 1984). Both problems related to what constituted an job advertisement. First, was the problem of 'multi-post advertisements' placed by one employer. Does a blocked advertisement for four posts count as one advertisement or four? For the purposes of this study the criterion applied was 'number of advertisements'. In the example given, this would mean that if the four posts were for the same post all covered by the same textual description they would only count as one advertisement. If, however, the four posts were for four different jobs and were accompanied by their own specific piece of text they were counted as four advertisements. The second problem was broadly similar to the first, but related to recruitment consultants placing an 'umbrella advertisement' containing multiple advertisements for more than one client. In this instance each separate piece of text pertaining to a job and a specific employer was treated as one advertisement.

A supplementary area of comparison was also made possible due to *The Guardian's* job advertising policy. Traditionally, it has allocated particular days of the week to particular occupational groupings/industrial sectors. For instance, since the early 1970's Tuesdays have been devoted to educational appointments. Although

the pattern and constitution of 'special sectorial' advertising has not remained consistent throughout the sampling period, the current format has been in operation since 1984. This enabled sector based comparisons to be made and trends to be extrapolated for the period between 1984 and 1993. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the 'special days' approach used by *The Guardian* is rather broad in scope (i.e. Monday, it is 'creative, media and marketing'; Tuesday, it is 'education'; Wednesday, it is 'social services, finance and personnel'; Thursday, it is 'computing, science and technology'; Friday, it is 'housing, conservation, town planning, leisure and general'). Given the breadth of the sectors represented in this part of the sample the analysis will be used to identify overarching trends and patterns rather than permitting detailed occupational comparisons. At the very least, as a supplementary technique, this secondary data offers substantial scope for triangulation with the survey results. Given that the latter is the primary mechanism for testing the hypothesis pertaining to the occupational group and industrial sector of discriminating employers (i.e. hypotheses 7 and 10).

4.3.3. Data Analysis

The proportion of job advertisements mentioning age was represented as a percentage of the total number of advertisements for each year. The data generated were analysed using regression. This technique was deemed appropriate given that the idea of regression is to summarise the relationship between two variables by producing a line of best fist (Bryman and Cramer, 1994). In this

study the two variables are (1) the proportion of job advertisements specifying age and (2) time. By calculating and plotting the line of best fit it is possible to draw inferences regarding the changing (or unchanging) pattern of age discrimination. In short, it enables us to establish where overt discrimination is increasing, decreasing or remaining fairly constant over time.

Regression was undertaken using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows software in conjunction with the appropriate reference material (i.e., Bryman and Cramer, 1997; Kinnear and Gray, 1994). The results of the analysis are discussed and presented later. In addition, to using SPSS for Windows a 'curve fit' software package was also used to generate an alternative model of the data. This approach also relied upon the application of regression but, in statistical terms, involved splitting the data into two distinct subsets and producing a separate regression equation for each. The explanatory power of the two models used will be discussed when the results of advertisement sampling are discussed in the next chapter.

As a supplementary analysis the longitudinal comparison of sector-based advertising, appearing in *The Guardian* between 1984 and 1993, has been restricted to confirmatory based percentage comparisons of proportions and trends between sectors and with the aggregated data which forms the basis of the regression analysis. This approach has been adopted because the relatively broad and heterogenous nature of the sectors analysed means that the data

generated do not permit detailed inferences to be drawn about particular occupations.

4.4 Survey-Based Research of Attitudes

Mann (1985) describes survey-based data gathering techniques as being forms of 'controlled' participation. For Mann 'controlled' means that the data gathering process is standardised in some way in the interests of scientific accuracy and 'participation' refers to the degree to which the researcher is actively involved in the situation being investigated. Mann identifies three main forms of controlled participation: the formal interview, the informal interview, and the self administered questionnaire. The distinction being that in the first two instances the researcher is present and in the last (s)he is not.

Notwithstanding the well documented problems of interviewer bias (see for example, Boyd and Westfall, 1979; Deutscher, 1984), the 'real time' presence of the researcher that interviewing requires inevitably imposes severe restrictions on the size of the sample that can be taken. Even telephone surveys as a form of interviewing (see for example: Dillman, 1978; Frey, 1989; Groves et al, 1988; Lavrakas, 1987) are relatively time consuming given that they are still not self administered in the way that questionnaire-based approaches are.

Interviews and questionnaires clearly have their relative strengths and weaknesses. Although interviews are clearly more flexible and

offer a "richness and spontaneity of information" (Oppenheim, 1966:32), the desire to generate macro-level generalisable insights into employers' attitudes is best fulfilled by eliciting the views of a large sample of respondents. Therefore, a standardised questionnaire has been developed which will permit a statistical comparison of attitudes and views to be undertaken. Details of the design, administration and limitations of the questionnaire will be examined within the following sub-sections relating to the surveying of attitudes.

The questionnaire is intended to primarily address the 'nature of ageism' hypotheses (hypotheses 2 to 10 inclusive) and the 'reasons for ageism' hypotheses (hypotheses 11, 12, 13 and 14). However, as with the documentary analysis discussed earlier, as part of the process of triangulation it also acts as a secondary means of testing other hypotheses. More specifically, it provides a basis for corroborating the other two research initiatives with regard to all of the 'prevalence and continuity' hypotheses (see section 3.2.) and hypotheses 16, 17 and 18 of the anti-ageist measures hypotheses. The means by which the questionnaire attempts to test the various primary and secondary hypotheses outlined above will be considered in the subsequent discussion of the questionnaire design (see section 4.4.2.).

4.4.1. The Sample

The total sample is made up of 248 personnel/HRM practitioners: 85 respondents were surveyed in 1990 and 163 were surveyed in 1995.

Personnel/HRM practitioners were selected for three main reasons. First, they are actively involved in the employment decision making processes (e.g. recruitment, training and redundancy) that have, or at the very least potentially have, an adverse impact upon certain age groups. Second, in comparison to line managers, personnel practitioners constitute a relatively homogenous group. Thirdly, given that the HR/personnel function is normally charged with the responsibility of implementing and maintaining 'equality of opportunity' they are more likely to be attuned to aspects of discrimination - and hence albeit indirectly ageism - in a way which other managerial staff are not.

The respondents were selected at random from the 1990 and 1995 editions of *The Personnel Management Yearbook*. The respondents were mailed a copy of the questionnaire accompanied by a covering letter and a 'stamped addressed envelope'. Of the 400 questionnaires posted 248 usable copies were returned which represents an overall response rate 62%. The actual response rates for two batches were somewhat different; 57% in 1990 (86 questionnaires returned out of 150) and 65% in 1995 (163 returned out of 250).

The gender breakdown of the sample reflected the general over-representation of women in personnel/HR-related work. Almost two thirds of the total sample were women (60.5%). Marginal differences in distribution were found for the 1990 and 1995 cohorts (66% and 58% respectively). A breakdown of the sample according to sex and other demographic factors is present in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 - A Breakdown of Questionnaire Respondents According to Various Demographic Factors

Factor/ Variable	1990 Cohort (%)	1995 Cohort (%)	Total Sample (%)
Sex:			
Male	34.1	41.1	38.7
Female	65.9	57.7	60.5
No indication	0.0	1.2	0.8
Age of Respondent:			
Under 20 yrs	4.7	0.6	2.0
20-30 yrs	64.7	14.7	31.9
30-40 yrs	20.0	37.4	31.5
40-50 yrs	9.4	31.3	23.8
50-60 yrs	1.2	12.9	8.9
Over 60 yrs	0.0	2.5	1.6
No indication	0.0	0.6	0.4
Job Category:			
Managerial/Supervisory	14.1	18.4	16.9
Professional/Technical	21.2	1.8	8.5
Administrative/Clerical	22.4	3.1	9.7
Personnel Management	41.2	75.5	63.7
Other	1.2	1.2	1.2
Industrial Sector:			
Public Sector	38.8	31.9	34.3
Private Sector	61.2	65.0	63.7
Voluntary	0.0	1.8	1.2
No indication	0.0	1.2	0.8
Size of Organization:			
Under 250 employees	17.6	1.8	7.3
251-500 employees	5.9	16.6	12.9
501-1000 employees	15.3	27.6	23.4
1001-2000 employees	9.4	19.6	16.1
2001-5000 employees	10.6	19.6	16.5
Over 5000 employees	41.2	14.7	23.8

As can be seen from table 4.1, the 1990 and 1995 distributions according to sex, industrial sector and size of organisation are fairly comparable. There are, however, some significant differences between the two cohorts in terms of age distribution and the job

category of the respondents. The 1990 survey is skewed towards younger respondents compared to the more normal distribution found in 1995. Equally, in 1990 a higher proportion of the personnel practitioners targeted reported themselves as being either 'professional./technical' or 'administrative/clerical' staff.

It is perhaps possible that there is a direct relationship between the variance found for age and occupation. One plausible explanation would be that in 1990 age discrimination was less of a topical issue than in 1995 (i.e., the IPM distributed an anti-ageist code of conduct to all members in 1991). If ageism was viewed as less important in 1990 then may be the task of responding to a "questionnaire on ageism" was passed to 'junior staff' whereas in 1995 when it is seen as more sensitive/important middle/senior personnel managers are more likely to respond. The junior staff referred to would typically be younger (i.e. under 30) and/or occupying either clerical or administrative positions within the personnel/HR department. Differing perceptions of the significance of ageism in employment between 1990 and 1995 might also at least partially explain the lower response rate in 1990. This issue warrants further consideration and will be revisited when the results of the questionnaire survey have been presented and discussed.

4.4.2. Design and Administration of Questionnaire A

The first research questionnaire was made up of four sections which were constructed with the intention of reflecting particular groupings of hypotheses. (A copy of the questionnaire is presented

as an appendix at the end of this thesis, see appendix A). The first section asked the respondents to supply general demographic data. The second probed employers' views of the legitimacy and justification for age discrimination in employment. The third sought to elicit stereotypical/non-stereotypical views of older and younger workers; the fourth section contained three short, broadly based questions which resonated with the issues covered in the documentary analysis and the survey of anti-ageist measures. It may be helpful to consider the design of the questionnaire in terms of scope, objectives and relevance of each of these four parts.

Part 1: General Demographic Information. This section invited respondents to supply information to a series of closed questions regarding: sex, age, occupation and supply information about the size and type of their employing organisation. These factors were treated as independent variables and they reflected the content of the hypotheses about the 'characteristics of discriminators' (hypotheses 6 to 10 inclusive). In seeking to establish a dependency relationship(s), this opening section focused upon the question of who is most likely to discriminate. For instance: are male employers more ageist than female employers? Do younger managers have more stereotypical views regarding the age of workers than older managers? Are public sector employers less likely to discriminate on the grounds of age than their private sector counterparts?

Space was provided for respondents to give their name, however, as indicated on the questionnaire and in the covering letter, this was

entirely optional. It was felt that offering the respondents complete confidentiality would help to maximise the likelihood that they would answer the questions in an honest and candid way. This seemed particularly important in this instance because respondents were being asked to give their personal views on a sensitive topic which might have been at odds with the organisation's official line.

Part 2: Reasons for Discriminating. The starting point for formulating this section was to follow Sudman and Bradbury's (1982) rather tongue-in-cheek guidance on questionnaire design:

> "The best advice we can offer to those starting out to write attitude questions is to plagiarize. While plagiarism is regarded as a vice in most matters, it is a virtue in questionnaire writing - assuming, of course, that you plagiarize good quality questions. By using questions that have been used before you can spare yourself much agony over the formulation of the questions and extensive pretesting."
> (1982:119)

This advice was followed to an extent. The main areas which informed the item pool of questions were taken from a previous study (i.e. Slater, 1973). However, the structure of the questions asked and the general methodology employed are somewhat different.

As suggested earlier (see section 3.4.), Robert Slater (1973) has produced probably the most comprehensive study of the reasons offered by the employers for discriminating on the basis of age. The results of his survey of 500 employers were used as a basis for developing hypotheses 11, 12 , 13 and 14, and his findings have also shaped the content of section 2 of the questionnaire. Slater (1983)

identified 'four categories of reasons for age discrimination, namely: personal, structural, work and other.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the following reasons offered in support of age discrimination were 'always acceptable', 'sometimes acceptable' , or 'never' acceptable:

Personal Reasons

a) Individual constraints - the type of abilities, energy and strengths sought are more common amongst a certain age group.

b) External constraints - family commitments, marital status and social stability.

c) Technical constraints - deters applicants who have: (1) outdated knowledge or (2) lack of expertise or technical experience.

Structural Reasons

a) Succession planning - the need to maintain career progression opportunities within the firm.

b) Age balance - postholder needs to be of a certain age to avoid upsetting the balance in ages of existing employees.

c) Financial considerations - the likely return on investment and potential length of service is effected by age.

d) Company policy - the firm has a formal or informal policy in favour of specifying age limits in all job advertisements.

Work Reasons

a) Job content factors - the work is too physically demanding or stressful to be carried by certain age groups.

b) Job requirement - where being within a specific age range can be viewed as a 'genuine occupational qualification', e.g. a Youth Worker or a Fashion Model.

Other Reasons

a) Information - to provide general information about the possible age of the successful candidate, rather than to purposefully discourage older or younger applicants.

b) Filtering - used as a mechanism for: (1) restricting the total number of respondents who apply for the vacancy or (2) shortlisting and/or sorting when a large number of application forms are returned.

The general approach is very different from that adopted by Slater (1973). He wrote to 500 employers who had specified upper age limits in job advertisements placed in the Daily Telegraph's 'Professional and Executive' column during a period of one month. He asked each respondent (the contact person in the advertisement): "How firm [i.e. inflexible] will your company be in implementing the upper age restriction and what were the main reasons behind stating an upper age limit?" (1973:31).

The present study differs from Slater's insofar as it is not limited to just those who have 'discriminated' (i.e. those who have specified an age limit). It seeks to elicit responses from a more general sample of employers, including those who do not discriminate on the basis of age and those who do so, but in a more subtle and sophisticated way. The restricted range of Slater's sample is problematic. For instance, there are probably some employers who find a number of reasons for age discrimination acceptable but, because of their company's general style of job advertisement, do not have the scope or

inclination to place age restrictions in their job advertisements. Moreover, the general design of the study and the wording of the question conflates the view of the respondents and that of the organisation.

A further criticism relates to the reliability of the sort of post hoc rationalisations that Slater approach might have encouraged. In short, the retrospective reasons offered by employers may not accurately mirror the original intent, at the time of writing the job advertisement. The current questionnaire is designed to overcome the aforementioned limitations and has the additional benefit of providing a measure of intensity which enables respondents to indicate the 'relative acceptability' of reasons offered in support of age preferences.

Although, Slater's work has certain methodological limitation it does, along with Collins (1975) replication study, nevertheless offer some opportunity for 'temporal triangulation.' Although different forms of measure, it seems reasonable to assume that the most frequently cited reasons offered in Slater's and Collins' studies can be equated with those which are deemed 'most acceptable' in the present study. In effect, this posits a relationship between popularity and legitimacy. (Hypothesis 14 has been formulated to test this assertion.)

Part 3: Age Stereotypes. This section of the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The five responses selected for this

form of attitudinal measurement being; (1) strongly agree; (2) agree; (3) unsure; (4) disagree, and: (5) strongly disagree. Although it is possible to use any number of points on a Likert scale, "most surveys employe scales using 5 to 11 points" (Edwards et a, 1997); and several researchers have demonstrated that the use of a greater number of points does not enhance measurement because respondents are unable to make such fine distinction (Bradbury and Sudman, 1991; Paul and Bracken, 1995). Equally, it has been shown that it is important to have a mid-point - and, therefore, a scale with an odd number of possible responses - to allow respondents who truly hold a neutral attitude to express it accurately. (Schwarz and Hippler, 1991). It is for these reasons that a five point format has been selected..

The major advantage of using a Likert scale is that it enables the responses to be weighted. This in turn enables attitudes to be given a quantitative value and thus explored using a range of statistical tools.

Having researched the issue of 'how' to carry out the measurement of attitudes, the question of 'what' to measure still remained. Rather than generate an item pool of age stereotypical constructs from past research, the 'repertory grid' technique (Kelly, 1955) was used to create a bank of questions. A small group of managers (n=10) were interviewed using the standard approach of a series of randomly selected comparisons between 'elements' (Bannister and Fransella, 1977) to develop age stereotypical 'constructs'. Here the word

'construct' is used in the 'repertory grid' sense of being "the way in which two things are alike and in the same way different from a third" (Oppenheim, 1966:209). In this case the constructs were derived from a series of randomly selected comparisons between two younger workers and an older worker or between two older workers and a younger worker. In half the sessions (n=5) the elements used were short fictious descriptions of older and younger workers; for the other half (n=5) the elements used were developed by the respondents anonymously drawing from 'real' older and younger workers who they knew. The two slightly different versions of the repertory grid technique demonstrated a high level of internal consistency insofar as they produced very similar 'prototypical' (Arnold et al, 1991) images of older and younger workers.

The item pool generated through the repertory grid technique lead to the formulation of 17 age-related statements. In accordance with Oppenheim's (1966) advice, a number of attitude statements have been reversed while others have been couched in neutral terms. In the interests of constructing a balanced bank of questions the items have been stated and coded as either: positive statements about older workers ('0+'); negative statements about older workers ('0-'); positive statements about younger workers ('Y+'); negative statements about younger workers ('Y-'), or; neutral statements ('N').

In effect, a negative statement about an older workers (e.g. they are change resistant) can, to a certain extent, be treated as being the inverse for younger workers (e.g. they do not resist change).

Ensuring this kind of mixture in terms of the loading of statements should not adversely impact upon either the responses or the system of scoring. Moreover, this approach circumvents the possibility of in-built statement bias by either positively or negatively skewing all the items in favour of a particular age group. It also helps to minimise the likelihood of a 'central tendency' (Converse and Presser, 1986; De Vellis, 1991) in the responses provided.

The final set of items, along with the respective age-related connotation in each instance, is:

1. Motivation tends to decline with age (O-).

2. Older workers are more stable and loyal to an employer than younger workers (O+).

3. Job performance is unaffected and unrelated to age (N).

4. Flexibility is generally greater amongst younger workers than older workers (Y+).

5. Younger workers are less cautious than older workers (Y-).

6. As a worker ages it does not directly impair or improve his/her problem solving and decision making ability (N).

7. There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change (N).

8. Older workers lack innovation and creativity (O-).

9. Effective communication and interpersonal skills improve with age (O+).

10. Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers (Y+).

11. Absence levels tend to be higher for older workers (O-).

12. Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts (O-).

13. Productivity and work output both decline with age (O-).

14. The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older (O+).

15. Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers (Y-).

16. Leadership skills do not improve or decline according to an individual's age (N).

17. Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts (O-).

The development of a Likert-scaled attitudinal instrument is intended to provide a means of identifying the nature and intensity of age stereotypes. In particular, it offers a means of testing hypotheses 3, 4 and 5, and , in conjunction with the demographic information collected in section 1 of the questionnaire, it also tests hypotheses 6, 6a, 6b, 7, 8 , 9 and 10.

Part 4: Closing Questions. The final section arose out the feedback from respondents during the 'pretesting stage' (see below for further details) of the questionnaire design . It consists of three broad questions which are intended to capture overarching responses and attitudes which might offer useful correlates with the other data collected elsewhere in the questionnaire. Furthermore, these insights gained in section 4 can be compared with those derived through the other two research initiatives, and as such, act as a form of triangulation for several hypotheses, (e.g. hypotheses 16 and 17).

The three questions are :

1. Do you feel that the use of age limits in job advertisements leads to age discrimination? And, why?

2. In the U.S.A. it is illegal to specify age limits in job advertisements. Do you feel that similar legislation should be introduced in this country? Why?

3. Overall, are you in favour of, or opposed to, age being used as a criterion in the recruitment process? Why?

The questions each start with a 'closed question' which enables the responses to be coded and quantified. Each opening question is then followed by a further 'probe' (i.e. Why?) which enables respondents to elaborate upon and justify their initial. responses. The latter form of 'open question' provides qualitative data which can be juxtaposed with the largely quantitative insights which are embraced elsewhere in the data gathering process.

Moving away from the specific content of the questionnaire, the final aspect of design and administration that needs to be considered is the issue of a 'pilot study', or as might more accurately reflect the nature of this survey stage: 'pre-testing'. Having devoted a considerable amount of time to the initial design of the questionnaire is tempting to rush straight into doing the fieldwork. As Edwards et al (1997:84) observe: "Although most survey books view the pretest as an essential final step in the survey design process, this step is frequently neglected, rushed, sloppily done, or performed in a ritualistic manner."

In accordance with the conventional wisdom on pretesting (see, Sheatsley, 1983; Howe and Gaeddert, 1991), this stage was undertaken with a small group of respondents with a view to "evaluating the survey content and assessing the survey administration time" (Edwards et al, 1997:85). Opinions differ on what constitutes a small group of respondents. For Verheyen (1988) the ideal pretest group is between 12 to 15 respondents, while Edwards et al (1997) suggest that a group of 8 to 12 people is more appropriate. In offering support for this view Edwards et al (1997) argue that "this smaller size is easier to assemble, big enough to provide multiple viewpoints, and small enough to get everyone's comments in a relatively short period." (p. 85)

The pretest group used comprised of 9 personnel practitioners all of whom were known by the researcher prior to administering the questionnaire. It was felt that this would not detrimentally effect the pretest. Indeed, the participants are perhaps more likely to offer honest and open feedback regarding the logistics and limitations of the questionnaire. The 9 participants were drawn from two organisations (a local authority and a manufacturing company).

The interviewing and debriefing revealed several instances where there were minor problems with the wording of questions. For instance, in the question on work reasons in section 2, it was not enough to put 'GOQ' not everyone knew this meant 'genuine occupational qualification'. Changes such as this one were made in

the circumstances were the terminology was either unclear or unduly ambiguous.

A more important area of criticism related to the overall design. The questionnaire that was used with the pretest group did not at that time contain section four. This final section was incorporated in response to pretest feedback. This arose because respondents felt that although they were asked about their attitudes throughout the questionnaire they were not given at any point the opportunity to state their overarching position. In other words, they agreed with some of the age based statements and not others., but were frustrated by not being permitted to state an overall 'pro' or 'anti-ageist' position. The pretesting phase did not identify any major problems with either the scoring or the distribution of responses.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

A wide range of techniques are available to carry out statistical analysis of the data gathered. The assumptions underlying techniques can vary widely and therefore so too can their applicability. Because of this the choice of technique(s) requires particular consideration. One of the greatest constraints on the type of measure(s) used is the nature of the data gathered.

As noted above, primarily, the questionnaire data was collected for quantitative analysis used a three-point frequency scale (see section 2) and a five-point Likert scale (see section 3). Both of these sections were designed with intervals that might be assumed to be equal. In

this case, the difference between the points on the scale is meaningful and constitutes interval or 'ratio-scaled' data (Bryman and Cramer, 1997). The process of data gathering has been designed to capture the maximum amount of data as 'interval data', which minimises the constraints on the choice of analysis technique(s). For other parts of the questionnaire the responses are numerically coded, but the number serves only as a label and the order of the responses and distance between them is meaningless. All of the numbers assigned to responses in section 4 act as a means labelling or naming responses; in this sense they are 'nominal data'. Much of section 1, with the exception of the questions about age and size of organization, is also nominal data.

The analysis of data was undertaken using SPSS for Windows. The starting point was to carry out some very straightforward statistical procedures, i.e. frequency distributions for each of the variables, cross tabulations and the calculation of mean scores (where appropriate). The more sophisticated statistical work involved three main forms of analysis, namely; (1) measuring the degree of association; (2) univariate analysis, and; (3) multivariate analysis.

Measuring the degree of association involved determining whether there was a statistical association between two variables using correction coefficients (Anderson, 1989). This form of analysis was used to establish the existence (or not) of relationships between any of the independent variables (i.e. sex, age etc.) and the dependent variables (e.g. stereotypical attitudes). By constructing a correlation

matrix it was possible to compare each variable against all of the others in order to explore the patterns of correlation. The majority of items in the questionnaire provide interval data, and, therefore, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was the most appropriate technique. This technique was applied to all the variables given that there is some strong evidence that it can also be reliably applied to non-interval data (O'Brien, 1979).

The particular form of univariate analysis undertaken was one-way ANOVA. This technique was used as a means of comparing averages between two or more populations. It is tailor-made for use with interval data and for analysing independent samples, such as the 1990 and 1995 attitude surveys. Furthermore, it is utilised as a means of comparing the mean scores for sections 2 and 3 according to the demographic factors/independent variables (such as sex, age and so on).

Finally, the utility of multivariate techniques in data analysis has been outlined by Hooley (1980: 381):

> ".....as many managers and analysts will recognise, when the number of variables concerned increases the possible combinations of two dimensional crosstabs increases even more rapidly. Multivariate techniques seek to examine all the variables of interest simultaneously and hence cut through the mass of output that can often be a barrier to the presentation of useful, incisive, management information."

However, as Hooley also points out, in using multivariate techniques it is important not to become 'technique oriented', but rather to select

techniques on the basis of the information they can deliver and the appropriateness of their use, rather than demonstrate the statistical prowess of the researcher.

In this research the multivariate technique applied to the data was 'factor analysis' (see Kim and Mueller, 1978a; 1978b; Tabachnick and Fidell, 1989). Factor analysis is, in effect, a set of techniques designed to account for the correlations among a set of variables in terms of relatively few underlying dimensions, or factors (Kinnéar and Gray, 1994). The factors produced by the application of factor analysis are mathematical entities which can be thought of as classificatory axes, with respect to which specific items or scores in a questionnaire can be plotted. The greater the value of a specific item's co-ordinate (or 'loading') on a factor, the more important the factor is in accounting for the correlations between the item and others in the questionnaire. The main benefit of using factor analysis is that it provides scope for establishing whether certain age-based attitudes are clustered or group together. In doing so it lends itself to meaningful testing hypothesis 3 and 4.

A factor analysis was undertaken in three stages. First, a matrix of correlation coefficients was generated for all the variable combinations. Second, from the correlation matrix, factors were extracted. The most common method for doing this, and the one used here, is called 'principal factors' or 'principal components' extraction. Third, the factors (axes) were rotated to maximise the relationships between the variables and some of the factors. Of the

methods available 'varimax' - a rotation method which maintains independence among the mathematical factors - was selected. Geometrically, this means that during rotation, the axes remain orthogonal (i.e. they are kept at right angles).

As advised by Kinnear and Gray (1994), initially only the first stage of the above process was performed in order to be able to inspect the correlation coefficients in the correlation matrix. This is done to check that the matrix does not possess the highly undesirable properties of 'multicollinearity' and 'singularity' (Stevens, 1992). Should either of these conditions be present, some of the variables might have to be amalgamated or possibly even removed from the analysis.

4.5. Survey-Based Research of Corrective Measures

The surveying of employer views regarding corrective measures aimed at tackling ageism was undertaken using a second questionnaire (see appendix B). The rationale underlying this decision is largely the same as that offered earlier (see section 4.4) in support of this approach for the questionnaire-based surveying of attitudes (questionnaire A).

The 'corrective measures' questionnaire has been designed as a supplementary instrument. As such it is generally less sophisticated than the research survey of employers attitudes insofar as: it is shorter; asks fewer questions; is used with a smaller sample; requires less elaborate statistical analysis; and does not have a

longitudinal dimension. The aims of the questionnaire are two-fold. First, it seeks to ask new questions and therefore gather data on issues not covered by the other research initiatives - i.e. the need for, and nature of, corrective measures. Second, as a triangulating mechanism it provides the opportunity to pursue a slightly more qualitative methodology to corroborate and verify (or not as the case may be) some of the major findings of the other more quantitatively rigorous research activities.

4.5.1. The Sample

The total sample comprised of 97 employers: 48 were personnel/HR practitioners and 49 were line/general managers. These two populations were deliberately matched in order to establish whether the views of 'managers' as employers differed from those of personnel/HR respondents.

The respondents were selected from a data base of local employers held by the Business and Management Faculty of a new university located in north-west London. The data base is extensive and covers a range of employers most of whom are located within a 10-12 mile radius of the university. It contains details of name, job title and address of at least one contact person at each company. In each instance the contact person listed has acted as the company sponsor for a part-time student taking a course at the university. Typically this means the contact person is the immediate supervisor of someone who has taken a part-time managerial/professional course. To ensure that an adequate number of 'managers' and 'HR

professionals' were captured job title and nature of sponsorship formed the basis for inclusion. Those who had a management-related job title and had sponsored part-time students on either the 'DMS' (Diploma in Management Studies) or the 'CMS' (Certificate in Management Studies) courses were categorised as 'managers'. Those who had a personnel/HR related job title and had sponsored part-time students on either the 'CPP' (Certificate in Personnel Practice) or the 'IPD' (Institute of Personnel and Development - stages I and II) courses were categorised as 'personnel' respondents.

The response rates for both cohorts were very high. Of the sixty questionnaires mailed to 'personnel' respondents 48 usable copies were returned which represents a response rate of 80%. Similarly, for 'management' respondents, 49 out of 60 questionnaires sent were returned (an 81.7% response rate).

There are probably several factors that have contributed to such high response rates. In particular, the fact that the questionnaire is contained on one sheet of A4 (albeit double-sided) meant that completion may not have been seen as an arduous task. The fact that the database is up-to-date and the contact persons are known (i.e. named), but are not generally the company's recognised point of contact with researchers may have also had a bearing on the number of questionnaires sent back.

The age range for the total sample was 20 to 57 years old with a mean age of 32.78. The 'personnel' and 'management' cohorts were

found to be highly comparable in terms of age distribution (i.e. mean ages of 32.85 and 32.71 respectively).

With regard to gender the breakdown for the total sample was 45% male and 55% female. These proportions varied when the two cohorts were considered. As with the previous questionnaire (see section 4.4.1.) the gender breakdown for personnel/HR practitioners reflected the overrepresentation of women in the discipline; 62.5% female and 37.%% male. By contrast, the distribution for the 'management' sample were more balanced; 53% male and 47% female. The gender imbalance between the two samples will be controlled during the application of statistical procedures to explore whether or not it acts as a major intervening, and therefore explanatory, variable in the analysis.

4.5.2. Design and Administration of Questionnaire B

The questionnaire (see appendix B) contains six short sections/questions of which three questions (Q1, Q2, and Q5) pertain to general perceptions of the prevalence and legitimacy of age discrimination while the remaining three questions (Q3, Q4 and Q6) relate directly to the nature and potential effectiveness of measures for combating ageism.

The first question - "Do you think age discrimination in employment is justifiable?" - is deliberately broad and intended to offer a positional insight into the respondent's attitude towards ageism. The same is true of the parallels that question two seeks to draw

with sexism and racism. In both instances a five-point Likert scale is used to restrict the range of responses, followed by the open question: why? This form of questioning is similar to the 'closed question then open question' style used in section 4 of the attitude questionnaire. However, those questions were specifically focused on the recruitment and selection process whereas the latter are more broadly framed. The closed part of question 1 is intended to test hypothesis 1. However, the data which is encouraged in the open-ended element of question 1 has the potential to provide some qualitative insights into reasons for discrimination and/or patterns of stereotyping and, as such, triangulate with the other research initiatives in testing the 'nature of ageism' and 'reasons for ageism' hypotheses. Similarly, the closed part of question 2 is specifically designed to test hypotheses 15, but the open element permits a wide remit of analysis.

The third question - "In the UK racism and sexism are unlawful, should similar legislation be introduced to address ageism?" - like the two previous ones has a closed element (i.e. yes/no) and an open one (i.e. why?). This question is clearly focused on the issue of the need for corrective measures, the first part represents a less restricted variation of the much narrower question about the need for legislation to tackle age limits in job advertisements, contained in the attitude questionnaire (see Q2, section 4). The qualitative information provided in the second part of this question offers the potential to develop richer insights into the views of various

corrective measures and therefore to address some of the issues raised in the 'anti-ageist' hypotheses (hypotheses 15 to 20 inclusive).

The fourth question is primarily aimed at addressing hypotheses 17 and 18. It invites respondents to rank the following anti-ageist measures in terms of their potential impact on age discrimination:

a) age based legislation

b) company guidelines and policies

c) professional codes of practice

d) re-education initiatives

e) financial rewards for non-discrimination

There are three main drawbacks to using a system of ranking. First, the priority order tells us nothing about the interval or 'distance' between items (Oppenheim, 1966). Second, it is difficult to use with vague, ambiguous or highly subjective constructs or objects and derive meaningful results (e.g. trying to rank several works of art). Finally, there is a cognitive limitation on the number of rankings most people can realistically cope with and, according to Oppenheim (1966:93), "to put ten things in rank-order is probably as much as can be asked".

The second and third drawbacks of ranking outlined above did not prove to be obstacles in this study. The measures outlined have been restricted to six alternatives all of which are reasonably well understood and relatively unambiguous measures. The first

drawback regarding intervals is more difficult to overcome. It is the product of the inherent nature of ranking and as such is unavoidable. This limitation is, however, more than compensated for by the main advantage that ranking has over alternative methods. Because of its ipsative approach of forced comparison ranking, unlike normative instruments (such as Likert-scaling), it does not allow respondents too simply say that "everything is important" or that "nothing is important". For those who have a strong anti-ageist predisposition it tempting with scaling techniques to indicate that all the measures will be highly influential (i.e. on a scale of 1 to 10 all rate as ten). In reality, with tangible items such as anti-ageist initiatives, it is unlikely that any two or more measures will have exactly the same impact, and therefore, data of this kind lends itself to ranking.

Having examined the legitimacy of using age as a factor in making recruitment and selection decisions in the previous questionnaire (see section 4.4), question 5 seeks to develop insights into the attitudes of employers regarding a broader repertoire of employment-related decisions, namely:

a) advertising job vacancies

b) shortlisting/interviewing

c) remuneration and pay increases

d) opportunities for training and development

e) retirement and redundancy issues

f) assessing physical ability or medical fitness to do a job

g) manpower planning

h) pension scheme eligibility

A three point scale ('always', 'sometimes' and 'never') was used to assess attitudes towards the eight aspects of HR practice. The intention is that this question both compliments and extends the narrower insights about recruitment and selection drawn from the previous questionnaire, and in doing it enables hypotheses 19 and 20 to be tested.

Finally, question 6 was composed to develop insights into the form that age legislation might take. Respondents were asked to score the following possible provisions using a scale of 1 to 10:

a) Exceptions where age preference is permissible.

b) Steps to encourage positive action.

c) Penalties for non-compliance.

d) Granting individuals the right to take age discrimination claims to an Industrial Tribunal

e) Enforcement by a regulating body (e.g. Equal Opportunities Commission or similar body).

Not only does this approach enable particular measures to be examined in terms of aggregated weightings (i.e., the mean score) it also enables a composite score to be derived across all 5/6 items which in itself offers a secondary measure of respondents commitment to the introduction of legislation.

4.5.3. Data Analysis

The use of open-ended questions in the opening three sections of the questionnaire enabled this limited volume of text to be examined using a modest qualitative methodology, which combined aspects of content analysis and discourse analysis. The data generated was juxtaposed with the more quantitative findings generated elsewhere.

As suggested at the outset of section 4.5, the statistical work undertaken with regard to this questionnaire was kept simple. Initially, and as part of the exploratory data analysis or 'EDA' phase (Hartwig and Dearing, 1979), frequency distributions, cross-tabulations and mean scores were calculated. ANOVA and Chi-square were utilised, but none of the more sophisticated multi-variable techniques were employed.

For the reasons outlined in the earlier discussion of statistical techniques used for analysing attitudinal data (see section 4.4.3.), one-way ANOVA was employed to analyse questions 1, 2, 5 and 6 in terms of comparing the significance of the mean scores for the 'personnel' sample and the 'management' sample. The differences in mean score which existed according to gender and age were also explored.

Given that question three produced 'nominal' data, this was analysed using the *Chi-square* test for association (Delucchi, 1983). As with the interval data, comparisons were made according to occupational group, sex and age. However, the point of comparison with Chi-

square is 'observed' and 'expected' frequencies, expressed via contingency tables, rather than the spurious measure of mean scores (Howell, 1992).

4.6 Summary

This chapter has sought to provide justification for the general methodological approach and the specific research techniques adopted. In particular, it has explained the rationale underlying the use of the survey method and the analysis of secondary data sources.

The aims and the relevance of the three research initiatives have also been presented. The discussion of each method has included coverage of issues pertaining to the research design, the data gathering phase and data analysis. As part of this process, various linkages have been established between the stated research hypotheses and the research instruments used. In order to assist the subsequent discussion of results it may prove helpful to provide a summary of these connections (see table 4.2 overleaf).

The presentation and discussion of results of the research initiatives outlined above will be undertaken in the next six chapters. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 will each of the chapters will deal with a particular aspect of age discrimination and Chapter 10 seeks to integrate the issues covered, and identify and analyse the major overarching outcomes of the research.

Table 4.2 - A Summary of Research Techniques and the Hypotheses Tested

Research Activity	Focal Area(s)	Principal Hypotheses Tested	Secondary Hypotheses Tested
Documentary analysis of job advertisements (placed between 1961 and 1993)	Prevalence of ageism	H1	H7,H10
	Trends in ageism	H1a,H1c	H7,H10
Questionnaire-based survey of employers' views of ageism in the recruitment and selection process (using a 1990 and a 1995 cohort)	Nature of age stereotypes	H3,H4,H5	H1a,H1b, H1c
	Characteristics of discriminators	H6,H6a,H6b, H7,H8,H9,H10	
	Reasons for ageism	H11,H12,H13, H14	H1b,H19
	Composition of disadvantaged groups	H2	
	Support for ageism		H1,H16, H17,H18
Questionnaire-based survey of employers' attitudes towards corrective measures (gathered in 1995)	Need for anti-ageist initiatives	H16,H17	H18
	Legitimacy of ageism	H1,H15	H6,H8,H10, H11
	Areas of employment most effected	H19,H20	H13

Chapter 5 - The Prevalence and Persistence of Ageism: Is There a Problem?

5.1 Introduction

There are two main facets to the presentation and discussion of results contained in this chapter. The following section is concerned with the prevalence of age discrimination. It offers a summation of the research findings regarding the existence of ageism and considers the impact of the problem. The subsequent section presents the results from questionnaire A and the documentary analysis pertaining to the temporal dynamics of ageism; it explores the extent to which the nature of both overt and covert forms of age discrimination have changed over time. More specifically, it examines whether ageist behaviour and attitudes have generally tended to increase, decrease or remain relatively static in relation to employment.

5.2. The Existence and Significance of Ageism

There are two main parts to this section. First, the incidence of age restrictions in job advertisements is examined as a measure of the existence of age discrimination. Second, the significance of ageism is assessed via comparisons with other forms of discrimination.

5.2.1 Age Limits and Age Discrimination

The analysis of age references in job advertisements appearing in the Guardian between 1961 and 1992 offers a measure of the existence of ageism. Out of a total of 21,085 job advertisements placed during the period, 2,525 (12%) contained upper and/or lower age limits. On

this evidence alone it is not possible to conclude that the practice of specifying age restrictions in job advertisements is either a premeditated or deliberate attempt to discriminate. However, irrespective of the underlying motives of employers, the net result is that older and younger are disadvantaged and, therefore, whether it is intentional or unintentional, age discrimination occurs.

The inclusion of age limits in 12% of job advertisements demonstrates that age discrimination can be regarded as prevalent. In effect is shows that over a period of three decades 1 out of every 8 job advertised has discouraged and/or excluded a particular age group from applying.

Further weight for the assertion of the prevalence of age limits in job advertisements is given by the earlier analysis of past samples (see table 2.1, Chapter 2); out of an aggregated total of 41, 055 job advertisements 33% included a direct reference to age. The differences found between the current study (at 12%) and past work (33%) can largely be explained by differences in the media surveyed and the constitution of the samples. Notwithstanding the inevitable variance between studies, if the present study is added to the previous work we find that out of a staggering total of 62,140 advertisements just over a quarter (25.8%) specified age limits.

In terms of prevalence, age limits are only part of the picture, they represent only the 'up front' and blatant expression of employers' age preference. The actual level of age discrimination is likely to

exceed the directly reported proportions if instances where age preferences exist, but are not made transparent by direct citation in job advertisements, are included. In these cases age discrimination is still occurring but is less obvious because it is enacted at either the shortlisting or interview stages of the selection process. Overall, the incidence of age limits in job advertisements provides some clear support for hypothesis 1, namely that:

> **Discrimination against employees, and prospective employees, on the grounds of age is a prevalent and significant problem in the workplace.**

Although an aggregation of age limits in job advertisements may constitute an indicator of 'prevalence' it does not offer insights into 'significance.' In particular, it could be argued that is not possible to directly infer from this documentary evidence that age limits actually lead to discrimination. The questionnaire results do, however, support a connection between age limits and age discrimination. Question 1, in section four of the attitude questionnaire ('questionnaire A') asked:

> Do you feel that the use of age limits in job advertisements leads to age discrimination? And, why?

The breakdown of the 248 questionnaire responses being: Yes = 80.2% (n=199); No = 6.0% (n=15); Sometimes/unsure = 10.9% (n=27),and; No reply = 2.8% (n=7).

With four out of every five responses being affirmative the support for age limits leading to age discrimination is substantial. It is made all the more compelling by the fact that the questionnaire respondents are the personnel practitioners, administrators and managers who are charged with the responsibility for advertising jobs within the organisation and are therefore likely to be representative of the employers who placed the job advertisements contained in the job advertisement sample.

The rationale provided by the respondents who indicated that age limits do lead to age discrimination centred around four main themes. The first and most popular category contained comments which portrayed age discrimination as an obvious and inevitable consequence of specifying age requirements. As one respondent put it:

> Age limits are a blatant statement of an organisation's intent to discriminate. What other message could you take away? [respondent A82].

This category accounted for more that a third of all responses and other similar "obvious/inevitable" type responses included:

> Of course - by definition [A6].
>
> Inevitably - if a certain age is specified within an advert then people of the required age will be treated more favourable than those of a higher/lower age [A8].
>
> Yes. Direct causal relationship [A13].

> Any age limits will obviously lead to some discrimination on the grounds of age, because certain sectors of society will be unable to apply [A63].
>
> The answer must inevitably be 'yes' [A65].
>
> Yes, once you set an age band you are discriminating [A69].
>
> Yes - the fact that someone has put an age limit must mean that they are discriminating, or at least encouraging it [A75].
>
> If age limits are specified discrimination is inevitable [A76].
>
> Of course - obviously [A126].
>
> Yes - otherwise why mention age? [A155].
>
> Yes, because it is discriminatory in itself [A156].

Two further responses in this category presented age limits and age discrimination as inextricably linked. However, they introduced a variation on the central premise of the question by asserting that rather than age limits leading to age discrimination it is a case of age discrimination leading to the use of age limits. They suggested:

> Age limits are a result of a propensity to discriminate, not a cause [A80].
>
> It is more likely that age discrimination leads to the use of age limits in advertisements. The discrimination is in place before the advert is written but a limit in the ad perpetuates and highlights discrimination [A124]

A secondary category, which contained about 20% of the responses, tended to focus upon prospective job applicants as the point of discrimination. This cluster of responses identified the link between age limits and age discrimination as hinging upon older and younger being deterred and discouraged from applying. In this regard the source of discrimination was seen to reside with the applicant and

several respondents talked of discrimination being 'self-fulfilling'. Responses in this category included:

> Yes. Specific age limits in adverts deters applications from individuals who are outside the specified age range [A2].
>
> Yes - irrespective of ability people outside the age range are deterred from applying [A19].
>
> Yes. More often "self discrimination" i.e., the individual is put off from applying [A41].
>
> Most definitely, as pre-selection on age will occur not only with the recruiting organisation but also with the applicant in terms of self selection [A54].
>
> Yes, self-fulfilling if only those of a certain age apply [A86].
>
> Yes, individuals are less inclined to apply for posts that they would normally be interested in [A106].
>
> Yes - people falling outside age range would feel that there was no point applying [A113].
>
> Yes. The people outside the age limits will not apply but they may have better experience/qualifications/ideas, etc [A145].
>
> Yes - it discourages applicants from outside the stated age category [A162].
>
> Yes. Older people will not apply [A207].

By contrast the third category of responses described the source of age discrimination as being firmly located with employers. They posited that age limits, as a source of age discrimination, were the product of age-based stereotypes, prejudice and unwarranted assumptions. This category covered responses similar to the last one (i.e. about 20% of the 'yes' answers). Typical responses were:

> Yes, because age limits are imposed on the basis of unfounded assumptions [A20].

> Employers will, at times, have fixed ideas with regard to which age groups will be most successful. Their perceptions are often based on false or unreliable information and will, therefore, inevitably involve them in age discrimination [A25].
>
> Yes, wrong assumptions are made about age, abilities and misconceptions about learning [A30].
>
> Yes, it assumes too much, e.g. older people are set in their ways - not easy to train - when the opposite can be true. It shuts out a large number of people [A117].
>
> Yes. Older workers are predominantly discriminated against and stereotypical perceptions of older people being untrainable, less motivated, just killing time until they can retire, etc are reinforced [A130].
>
> Yes, because limits are often applied for the wrong reasons and relate to stereotypes about the young and the old [A137].
>
> Yes, often age is not a requirement of the job just the advertisers prejudices [A225].

The final category of responses, like the previous one, concentrated upon employers as the source of discrimination but suggested that the motives were less to do with stereotypical attitudes and more to do with a pragmatic concern for restricting the total volume of applications and for shortlisting/filtering purposes. The number of responses in this category were considerably less than those in the other three groupings with six direct examples, namely:

> Yes - will be used as a filter [A21].
>
> Competent applicants above the quoted age range would not be shortlisted [A34].
>
> Yes, particularly where age limits are a device to limit the number of applications [A53].
>
> Yes. Narrowing the pool of talent [A68].

> Yes. If a manager has made a decision about the age range of suitable candidates they are unlikely to look outside of this range when shortlisting. They should indicate the experience and qualifications required not age [A90].
>
> It can do, as with a high number of applicants, the age limit can be too easier way of screening [A93].

It should be noted that although the 'yes' responses mapped onto several contrasting rationales for a direct causal relationship between age limits and age discrimination, many of the reasons offered are contiguous and primarily represent different points of emphasis rather than mutually exclusive interpretations. For example, age limits are likely to be simultaneously a result of employers' prejudice (as indicated in a number of responses) and a source of discouragement for applicants outside of the specified age range (as indicated in another set of responses).

The 6% of respondents who indicated that age limits do not lead to discrimination presented two very different kinds of rationale. First, there were those who suggested that age limits were acceptable because age is a legitimate criterion for making recruitment and selection decisions. Second, several respondents felt that age discrimination does not arise because candidates outside of the specified range are not likely to be deterred. In effect, this conclusion is the inverse of the 'age limits deter and discourage' argument offered earlier by 'yes respondents' as a source of age discrimination. Illustrations of the 'no views' are:

> No. Experience of some candidates will make certain people unsuitable [A5].

> No, as applicants will tend to apply for a position even if they are outside of the age limit if they feel they would be suitable for job [A66].
>
> No, provided it is justified [A72].
>
> No. Usually good reasons are behind age limits to certain vacancies (within our organisation) [A85].
>
> No - often an ad will state "preferred age range" - this does not preclude others outside range. Often genuine reasons for an age range - depends on job/size of company and company profile [A91].
>
> No. If their use is indicative - for example to indicate a level of experience [A149].
>
> No - most would apply regardless of restriction [A247].

The fact that a significant proportion of job advertisements contain age limits (i.e. 1 out of 8 in the current study or 1 in 4, if past studies are also considered) and the majority of questionnaire respondents (just over 80% of the 248 employers surveyed) directly connected age limits with age discrimination, constitutes very strong positive support for hypothesis 1.

5.2.2. Ageism Compared to Racism and Sexism

Further insights into the prevalence and significance of ageism can be gleaned from comparisons made with other forms of discrimination. In effect, attitudes about other forms of discrimination can act as a benchmark for attitudes towards ageism in terms of relative severity and intensity. Hypothesis 15 stated that:

> **The majority of employers view ageism as less socially acceptable than either racism and sexism.**

Question 2 of the questionnaire was designed to test this assertion. Respondents were asked to compare age prejudice to discrimination on the grounds of race and gender using a five point scale (i.e. from 'far more of a problem' through to 'far less of a problem') and then to provide a short accompanying explanation. The distribution of responses (n=97) can be summarised as follows:

a) far more of a problem	14.4%
b) slightly more of a problem	12.4%
c) about the same	37.1%
d) slightly less of a problem	24.7%
e) far less of a problem	11.3%

These results portray age discrimination as generally being less of a problem than sexism and racism, with 36% indicating it was slightly far less of a problem compared to 26.8% for slightly more/far more of a problem. This outcome intimates that sexism and racism are generally regarded as more important and significant forms of discrimination than age and therefore offers support for hypothesis 15.

The use of the word 'problem' in the question, without providing any further elaboration on what is meant by the term, was deliberate. It forced respondents to place their own interpretation on the notion of the 'problem' and this ensured that the accompanying open responses were not unduly constrained. Several dominant framings

of the problem emerged from the rationales provided by respondents. In the majority of cases the problem appeared to rest on a distinction drawn between prevalence and intensity. For those suggesting age discrimination was more of a problem there reasoning often reflected a concern that there is 'a lot of it going on' and that it is 'going on unchallenged/unnoticed'. Examples of these views included:

> Unseen whereas racial and sexual discrimination is a recognised and unlawful practice [B27].
>
> There is quite a lot of discrimination against age and people don't speak out enough about it [B28].
>
> Because there is no legislation, so it is easier to ignore it [B29].
>
> There are no laws to protect people and employers discriminate knowing there will be no penalty [B33].
>
> This is more of a problem as there are no guidelines to follow it is acceptable to discriminate on age grounds [B35].
>
> I feel it is slightly more of a problem as it is unchallenged e.g. there is no legislation and unrecognised [B36].
>
> No policy to prevent it. It's 'hidden' affects everyone in the end. Doubles up on sex, race and disabled persons discrimination [B40].
>
> I think it occurs more often due to other legislation. We can still 'write off' huge groups of people as being unsuitable to do certain jobs [B45].
>
> It goes across the board, affecting everyone regardless of race or gender [B51].
>
> Far more subtle and unconsciously socially acceptable. Historic precedent/overseas precedent in seniority promotion regardless of performance [B60].
>
> There are methods for monitoring equal ops, but there is no method for age [B68].
>
> More widespread. Blatant discrimination in adverts [B78].

By contrast, those reporting age discrimination as less of a problem seemed to focus on issues of intensity and severity. As one respondent, succinctly summarising her views of age discrimination, put it:

> Being a black woman it is further down my list of concerns when I go for a job [B16].

For some, racial and sexual prejudice is more deep rooted and engenders more intensely negative attitudes than ageism. Comments in this category included:

> Racial/sexual discrimination has more scope for physical abuse. People are less likely to have been conditioned into age discrimination than to racial/sexual discrimination [B3].
>
> People appear to be less inherently prejudice against age than as against sex or race [B5].
>
> In most cases regarding age (older) a person would have been employed, but in racial cases its possible the person would not have that opportunity [B26].
>
> I don't feel that age discrimination is as important and I feel that there are not as many employers who discriminate against age as they do race/sex [B42].
>
> I do not believe that there are as many preconceptions and stereotypes related to age as there are to sex and race [B48].
>
> Effects of age discrimination not as severe as those of sex/race [B55].
>
> Racial discrimination and sexual discrimination are part of everyday life. We all worry about these things everyday [B59].
>
> Generally, people are ruled out by racial and sexual discrimination. If they overcome that hurdle, they may suffer age discrimination [B61].
>
> Racial and sexual discriminating is far more of a personal trauma compared with age discrimination [B88].

For others who saw ageism as less of a problem the severity of its effects are moderated by continually shifting preferences between young and old. Similarly, others focused on the transient nature of moving in and out of disadvantaged age groups. For example:

> I don't see it as a problem on the basis of swings and roundabouts - sometimes you require old/sometimes young. Race and sex is black and white and is based upon prejudice. I don't see age discrimination as founded in prejudice [B6].
>
> Race/sex discrimination is far more overt and also experienced by individuals from the particular groups all their lives [B15].
>
> Because age (whether young or old) is only a period in one's life. One's race and/or gender is for a lifetime (in most cases anyway!) [B39].
>
> Many elderly or ageing people are happy to accept their lot as part of the human condition and life process [B57].

The insights generated by the open part of question 2 have clear implications for drawing inferences about the status of hypothesis 15. Whether ageism is more or less socially acceptable seems to revolve around what we mean by 'socially acceptable'. If we mean ageism is more prevalent and not sufficiently challenged then it is more of a social problem than other forms of discrimination. If, however, we concentrate on how deeply rather than frequently people are affected by ageism it would seem that it is less of a social problem than either race or sex discrimination.

Inevitably, the relative ranking of different forms of discrimination is highly subjective and some would argue rather invidious. What does seem apparent from the results is that ageism can generally be

regarded as a significant problem in its own right. Indeed, the fact that the greatest proportion of respondents (37.1%) see it as being as much of a problem as sexual and racial discrimination in itself bears testimony to the perceived significance of age discrimination.

5.3 Longitudinal Patterns of Age Discrimination

There are two main parts to this section. First, the sample of job advertisements is re-examined on a year-by-year basis in order to extrapolate the general trend of age citation. Given the linkage between age limits and age discrimination identified earlier in this chapter (see section 5.2.1.), this form of enquiry offers insights into the changing nature of overtly discriminatory behaviour on the basis of age.

The second part of this section considers the extent to which attitudes regarding age are changing. The results drawn from 1990 and 1995 cohorts of questionnaire A are used as a basis for undertaking this analysis.

5.3.1. Evidence of Changing Behaviour

The structured analysis of the citation of age limits in job advertisements placed between 1961 and 1992 is intended to test hypothesis 1a, which states that:

> **The overall level of overt discrimination in employment-related decision making has decreased over time.**

A fundamental assumption made here is that the use of age limits in job advertisements constitutes 'overt discrimination'. The use of age limits can be seen as 'overt' insofar as it is explicit and relatively unambiguous (i.e. an age requirement is either specified or not specified). It is 'discriminatory' because, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it indicates a preference and thus encourages certain age groups and discourages others. Robust support for this viewpoint can be found in the responses offered by employers in relation to the question regarding the connection between age limits and age discrimination discussed earlier (see section 5.2.1.).

The results of the year-by-year comparison of advertisements appearing in The Guardian between 1961 and 192 are present in table 5.1. As can be seen from the straightforward visual inspection of the shifting percentages of age citation, this form of overt age discrimination is clearly declining.

Although declining, the relationship between the proportion of job advertisements referring to age (AGEREF) and time (t) is extremely unlikely to be linear. A linear relationship implies that the number of advertisements referring to age will change in the same direction and by the same amount over time. Since it is impossible for AGEREF to be greater than 1 (i.e. 100%) or fall below zero, we should expect a relationship that limits AGEREF between these values.

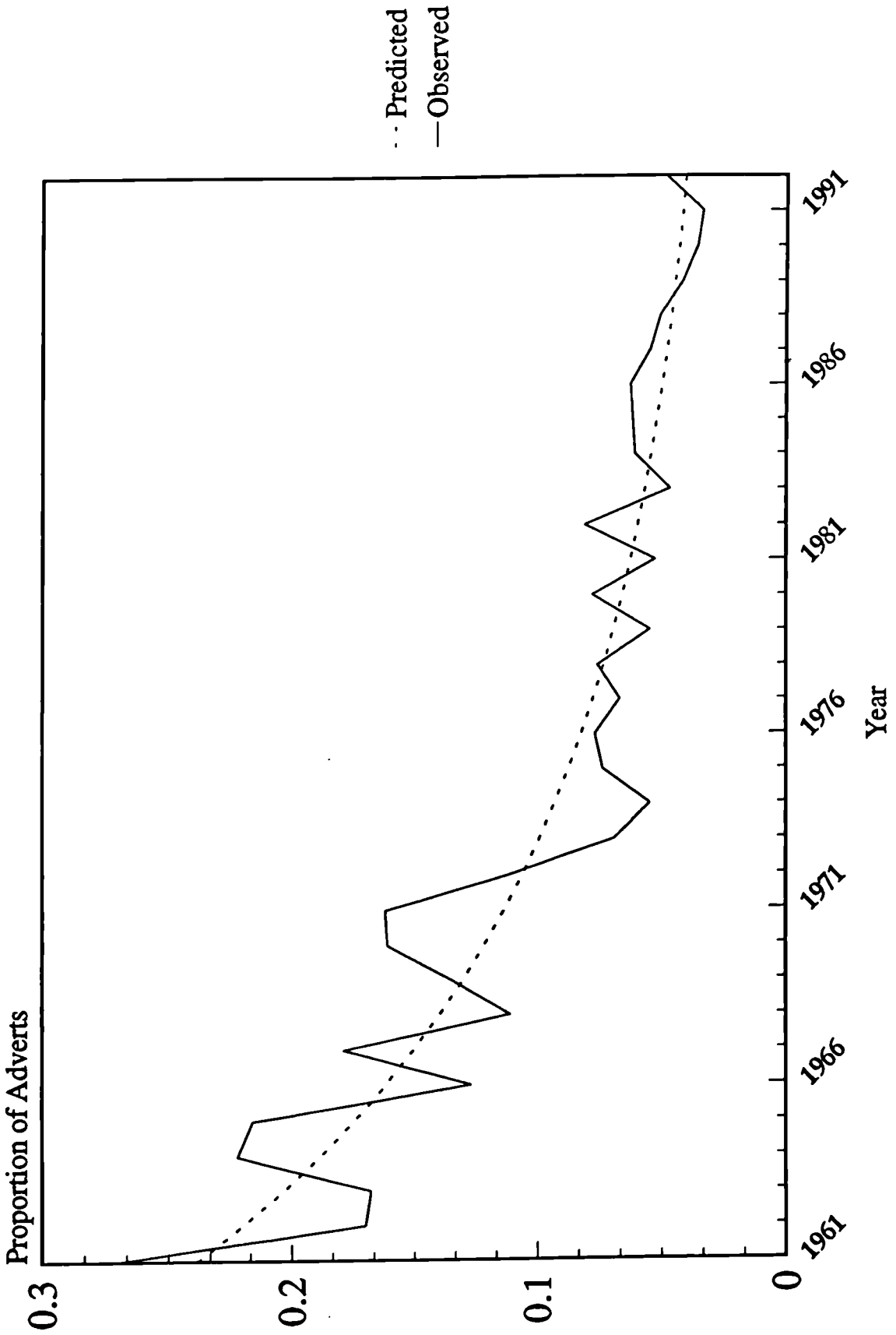
Table 5.1 - Summary of the Longitudinal Survey of Age Restrictions in Job Advertisements between 1961-1992

Year	Total No. of Adverts	Adverts Mentioning Age (*n*)	(%)
1961	1461	396	27.10
1962	1324	225	16.99
1963	1020	171	16.76
1964	1189	264	22.20
1965	1317	285	21.64
1966	1029	131	12.73
1967	771	138	17.90
1968	738	82	11.11
1969	617	83	13.45
1970	472	76	16.10
1971	358	58	16.20
1972	386	43	11.14
1973	423	29	6.86
1974	487	27	5.54
1975	340	25	7.35
1976	222	17	7.66
1977	194	13	6.70
1978	302	23	7.61
1979	878	48	5.47
1980	347	27	7.78
1981	283	15	5.30
1982	272	22	8.01
1983	381	18	4.72
1984	490	30	6.12
1985	578	36	6.23
1986	667	42	6.30
1987	697	38	5.45
1988	787	40	5.08
1989	860	36	4.19
1990	926	33	3.56
1991	556	19	3.42
1992	713	35	4.91

Figure 5.1. (overleaf) presents the results in the form of a graph and using regression it also shows the line of best fit (i.e. the broken line referred to as the 'predicted values'). The regression equation is:

$$AGEREF = 0.0282 + 0.230\ e^{-0.090t}$$

Figure 5.1 - A Graph of the Observed and Predicted Proportion of Job Advertisements Referring to Age Between 1961 and 1992



The regression diagnostics can be summarised as follows:

Source	DF	Sum of Squares
Regression	3	0.425
Residual	29	0.019

$R^2 = 0.843$

The best fit with the observed data (see figure 5.1) was achieved by modelling the change in the proportion of job advertisements referring to age over time as an exponential decay towards an irreducible limit. This satisfies the modelling conditions outlined above with respect to the lower boundary conditions, but not the upper boundary. It is entirely possible for AGEREF to be greater than one in this model (in fact, the model predicts the value of AGEREF to be 1 in 1943). This is clearly not reasonable. Although an exponential curve has considerable explanatory power in terms of the data collected, the notion that AGEREF forms an S-curve has considerably more pragmatic and intuitive appeal. This would mean that the period for which data has been gathered represents only the bottom of such an S-curve, and while no information is available about the upper range (i.e. pre-1961) embracing the S-curve would suggest that just as the incidence of AGEREF levels out at the tail of the curve a similar plateauing effect occurs at the upper end of the curve at a value somewhere below 1.

The analysis suggests that the number of job advertisements referring to age has been tending to fall since the 1960s. However, it

also suggests that this fall will not lead to a total removal of age limits in advertisements, but that there will always be a certain level of such advertisements, which represents the minimum that might be reached in the future. This minimum is estimated to be 2.8% of the total number of job advertisements. Above this minimum level the number of advertisements referring to age will decline by an average annual decay rate which is estimated at 8.6%.

The appeal of this model is strong. It suggests that there are certain job advertisements that will always contain references to age, but that these advertisements are a relatively small proportion of the total. We can interpret this core as the body of jobs where discrimination on the grounds of age is necessary and unavoidable (e.g. having to be at least 18 to work shifts or needing to employ a child under two years old to model nappies). These exceptions would be equivalent to the 'genuine occupational qualification' exemptions permitted under the legislation covering sex and race. However, it is unlikely that these legitimate circumstances would be commonplace enough to account for the continued use of age in the predicted 2.8% of instances. At least a proportion of the core of advertisements specifying age limits will be intransigent employers who choose to discriminate irrespective of shifting social conventions.

It is possible to construct an alternative model which assumes that there may be a discontinuity in the data around 1972-1974. To further investigate this, the data set was split and curve fitting was

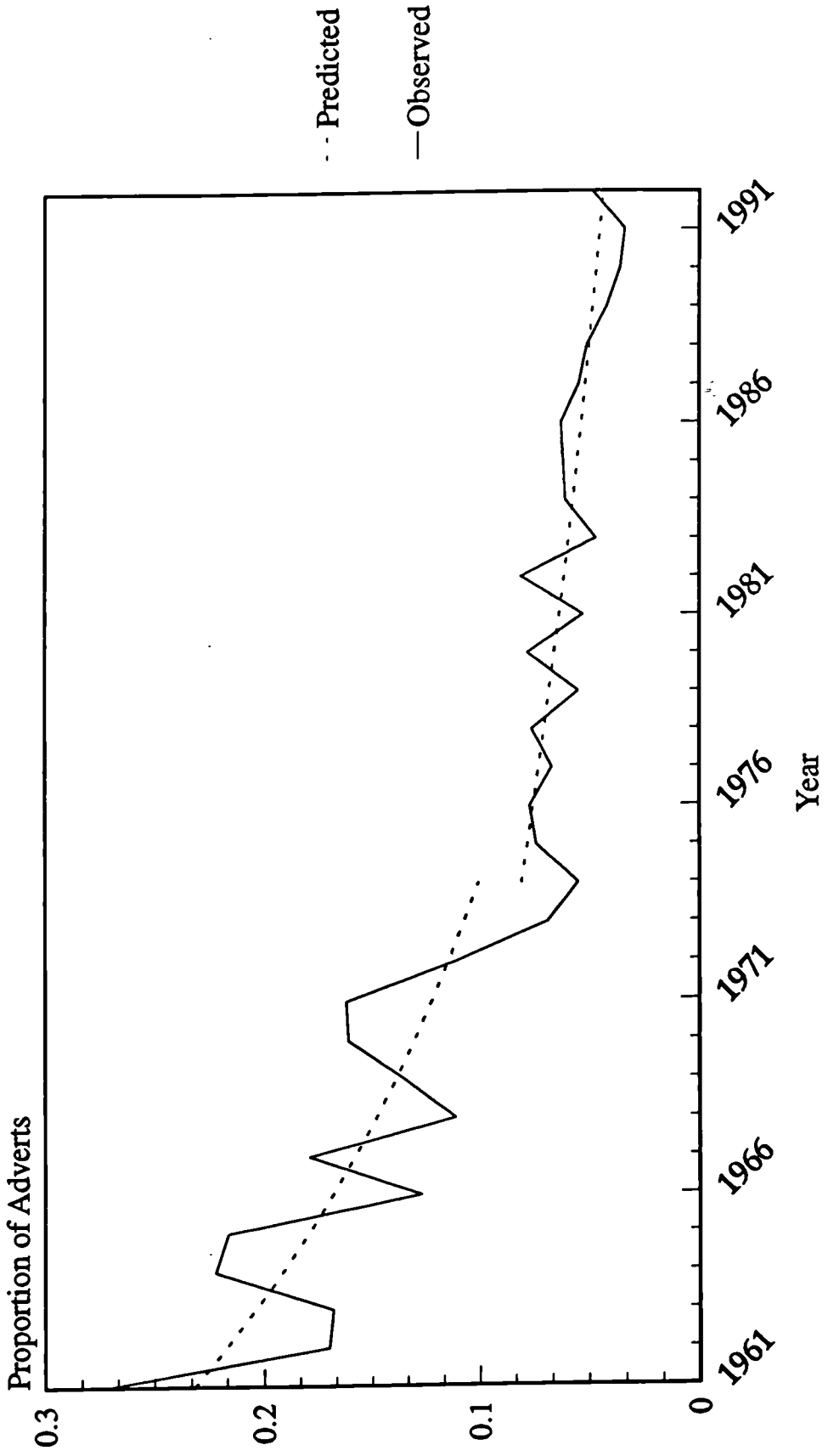
undertaken for each subgrouping. The models are specified as follows:

1961 - 1973	1975 - 1992
AGEREF $= 0.247\ e^{-0.064t}$	AGEREF $= 0.130\ e^{-0.034t}$
$R^2 = 0.568$	$R^2 = 0.575$
% change p.a. = 6.2	% change p.a. = 3.3

These models are plotted in figure 5.2 (overleaf). If it is accepted that a discontinuity occurred in the period 1972-1974, then it is instructive to examine the models either side of this point. Before 1973, the proportion of advertisements referring to age was falling at a rate of 6.2% per year. Around 1973, there was a one off drop of about 2% in the number of advertisements mentioning age. Subsequently, the number of advertisements has been declining, but more slowly, at about almost half the previous rate (i.e. 3.3% p.a. compared to 6.2% pre-1973).

For several reasons the 'two-part discontinuity' model seems less plausible than the 'single line s-curve/exponential decay' model. First, the single line model represents a good fit in statistical terms and it always possible to split data into more and more subsets in order to further improve the degree of statistical fit. Second, peaks and troughs of a similar magnitude to the one observed in 1972-74 have arisen in the past (e.g. 1962, 1966 and 1968) and therefore a drop of 2% at this point in time may simply represent a chance fluctuation that still falls within the normal range of variance.

Figure 5.2 - An Alternative Model of the Predicted Proportion of Job Advertisements Referring to Age Between 1961 and 1992



Thirdly, it is difficult to see why 1972-74 might be a critical phase for the inclusion of age limits in job advertisements given that it is the point from which the changes in the incidence of citations slows down rather than accelerates. In other words, it is the point where age discrimination starts to level off, which is in itself a characteristic that is consistent which the 's' curve/exponential decay of the 'one-line' model.

The general pattern of change observed in both models is not dissimilar to what we might expect to find for other forms of discrimination in employment such as racism and sexism. There are several clear elements to the pattern. First, a period of gradual but persistent decline as attitudes shift regarding the social acceptability of a phenomenon. For example, through a process of colligation we find that racial discrimination moves from the segregation of the 1950's in the USA and the Notting Hill Riots of the late 50's in the UK to the protests of the 1960's (i.e. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, etc.) and through to the introduction of legislation in 1975 - along with these events we can discern a concomitant shift in attitudes. The second aspect of the pattern, is a slowing down and levelling out of the incident of discrimination as the decline reaches a small hard core of resistors (i.e. racists and male chauvinists) who continue to overtly discriminate irrespective of punitive measures or social pressure. The final part of the pattern arises because the decline in the social acceptability of overt discrimination drives a certain proportion of discrimination underground. In other words, more sophisticated and subtle alternative methods for discriminating are

developed. Racial discrimination provides a clear illustration of the emergence of covert forms of discrimination. Racism is not limited to the overtly racist behaviour of skinheads and the National Front, other discriminators exist within mainstream society but exercise their prejudices in more indirect and less obvious ways. The only major intervening variable that differentiates sexism and racism from ageism is the introduction of legislation. Legislation may have accelerated the decline of the acceptability of sexual and racial discrimination, and lead to a lower base of resistance, but the pattern remains the same.

Whichever model is developed, the same inference can be derived: the overt use of age limits in job advertisements has declined over the past three decades to a residual level (2.8%) which looks likely to persist. The analysis, therefore, has produced strong positive support for hypothesis 1a.

5.3.2. Evidence of Changing Attitudes

The basis for drawing inferences about changes in attitudes towards age discrimination is the 1990 (n=85) and 1995 (n=163) questionnaire surveys of personnel managers. If attitudes have altered we might expect differences to arise in: the perception of age stereotypes (section 3); the legitimacy of reasons offered in support of age preferences (section 2), and; responses to the questions regarding the general acceptability of ageism and the need for legislation (section 4).

Aspects of stereotyping and the nature of the reasons offered for ageist behaviour are discussed more fully in subsequent chapters (i.e. chapters 6 and 8). The primary purpose of utilising these sources here is to generate a macro-level perspective on attitudes rather than to explore specific 'stereotypes' and 'reasons' in depth.

In section two of questionnaire A (see appendix B) respondents were asked to indicate their opinion of the acceptability of 13 reasons presented for using age limits. In each instance the scale and the scoring was: 'always acceptable' - 1 pt; 'sometimes acceptable' = 2 pts, and ; 'never acceptable' = 3 pts. Therefore, the lower the respondents score is the greater their support for the use of age as a factor in making employment decisions.

For all 13 reasons the mean scores for the 1995 sample were higher than those for 1990. This indicates that the 1995 respondents found all the reasons offered in support of the use of age preferences less acceptable than their 1990 counterparts. The application of ANOVA found that the differences in these mean scores were statistically significant in 10 out of 13 instances (i.e. two reasons at $p<.05$, three reasons at $p<.01$ and the remaining five reasons at $p<.001$). Finally, by adding up the scores for each of the 13 items it was possible to gain a composite mean score for 1990 and 1995 - this was also found to be highly significant ($p<.0001$). These findings offer some very strong support for a change in attitudes regarding the acceptability of the use of age preferences. The marked shift in the perceptions of

what constitutes acceptable reasons indicates that discrimination in employment in itself is becoming less acceptable.

A similar conclusion can be derived from the data on stereotypes. Out of the 17 items forming the pool of stereotypes, six were found to have statistically significant differences between the mean scores for 1990 and 1995. Using ANOVA, all six independently illustrated that age stereotypical attitudes were less prevalent in 1995.

In terms of the statistically significant items, when compared with the 1995 sample, the 1990 respondents saw younger workers as: (1) more motivated, (2) more flexible, and (3) more willing to take risks. They also portrayed older workers as: (1) more change resistant, (2) lacking innovation and creativity, and (3) taking longer to train. As with the insights generated through the analysis of 'reasons', the 'stereotypes' data indicates that attitudes are becoming less stereotypical and de facto less ageist.

The final point of comparison between the 1990 and 1995 relates to the responses to the three open questions contained in section four of the questionnaire. Given the 'nominal' nature of the data, chi-square tests were used to identify whether any significant differences existed. This analysis did not find any statistically significant differences between the populations. Similar proportions felt that age limits lead to age discrimination (76% in 1990 vs 86% in 1995), that age legislation should be introduced (58% in 1990 vs 50% in

1995), and were opposed to age being used as a selection criterion (77% in 1990 vs 75% in 1995).

Overall, the support for a change in attitudes is overwhelming: all sixteen of the statistically significant results share a uniformity of direction, none offer any contra-indications. The statistically significant differences found point to the conclusion that employers are becoming less ageist in terms of their attitudes towards older and younger workers.

As many researchers have noted, attitudes and behaviour are inextricably linked (see for example: Eagly and Chaiken, 1992; Hellriegel et al, 1995; Myers, 1993; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Robbins, 1989). The nature of attitudes, and the significance of their connection with behaviour, is demonstrated by Nelson and Quick (1994):

> Attitudes are individuals' general affective, cognitive, and intentional responses toward objects, other people, themselves, or social issues. As individuals, we respond favorably or unfavorably toward many things: animals, co-workers, our own appearance, politics. The importance of attitudes lies in their link to behavior. For example, some people prefer either cats or dogs. Individuals who prefer cats may be friendly to cats but hesitate in approaching dogs.

If we substitute the words 'cats' and 'dogs' in the above illustration and replace them with 'older workers' and 'younger workers', we can begin to see ways in which the attitudes towards age and ageism held by employers are likely to manifest themselves in their everyday behaviour.

Given the low levels of overt age discrimination exhibited since 1990 (e.g. see figure 5.1. earlier) and the relative prevalence of ageist attitudes, it seems reasonable to conclude that much of the discrimination that arises on the grounds of age is in fact of the less obvious, covert, and possibly even unconscious, variety. Hence, changes in covert forms of age discrimination can be seen as mirroring changes in ageist attitudes.

Hypothesis 1b suggests that:

> **The overall level of covert age discrimination in employment related decision making has increased over time.**

The results of the analysis run contrary to this hypothesis. It is unlikely that an increase in covert age discrimination would be accompanied by the decline in ageist attitudes reported above. In effect, this would mean that the behaviour exhibited was inversely related to the attitudes held. This assertion becomes all the more difficult to sustain if we consider the well established theory of 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1957) - which suggests that individuals are uncomfortable with, and seek to minimise, inconsistencies between their attitudes and their behaviour. Instead, the more plausible expectation is that a decline in ageist attitudes would result in a corresponding reduction in the overall expression of covert age discrimination. On this basis hypothesis 1b

is not supported: rather than increasing, the research evidence suggests that covert age discrimination is in fact decreasing.

5.4 Summary

In accordance with the assertion made in Hypothesis 1, age discrimination has been shown to be a prevalent and significant problem. In particular, corroboration for this finding has come from the documentary analysis of job advertisements, where 1 out of every 8 advertisements surveyed (n = 21,085) contained an age restriction, and the responses to an open question in questionnaire A, where 80% of employers (n = 248) indicated that age limits in job advertisements lead to age discrimination.

Strong support also found to exist for hypothesis 15, with 27% of the 97 respondents completing questionnaire B suggesting that ageism was either 'far more' or 'slightly more' of a problem than racism or sexism. In addition, a further 37% indicated that it can be regarded as being as much of a problem as these other two forms of discrimination. The accompanying rationales demonstrated that the relative importance attached to ageism was largely determined by perceptions of prevalence and intensity; ageism was generally seen as more common place than either racism and sexism, but not as having such a deep and long term impact upon those who are disadvantaged.

The longitudinal analysis of the job advertisement sample produced clear evidence of the existence of an 'S-curve/exponential decay'

model of the incidence of age limits. The general pattern of decline observed for this form of overt discrimination, therefore, provides strong positive support for hypothesis 1a.

A comparison of the attitudes towards age and ageism expressed by the 1990 and 1995 cohorts of questionnaire A revealed a consistent, and statistically significant, decline in ageist attitudes. This finding is antithetical to hypothesis 1b which posits that covert age discrimination is increasing over time. Therefore, this hypothesis is not supported by the research.

The results of the longitudinal research into ageist behaviour and attitudes - which comprehensively demonstrate that both overt and covert forms of age discrimination have tended to decline over time - have implications for hypothesis 1c, which states that:

> **The overall level of age prejudice among employers has remained static over time.**

The idea that there has been an attitudinal and behavioural shift in age discrimination, but that the general level of age prejudice has not altered seems untenable. If, as is clearly the case, ageism has declined it seems logical to conclude that age prejudice, which constitutes a predisposition towards age, must also have reduced. Consequently, hypothesis 1c is not supported by the research findings.

Finally, although the latter part of this chapter shows that age discrimination has declined over time, we cannot conclude that is irreversibly moving towards extinction and, therefore, no longer being a significant problem. As will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, a number of age-related stereotypes still prevail and there remains a substantial caucus of employers who resolutely persist in discriminating on the grounds of age.

Chapter 6 - Images of Older and Younger Workers: What Age Stereotypes Exist?

6.1 Introduction

There are three main parts to this chapter. In the following section the results of the attitudinal research on age stereotyping (derived from section 3 of Questionnaire A) are analysed and explored in terms of the relative impact and significance of particular attributes. This entails considering the relative weighting attached to each stereotypical statement, the frequency of occurrence, and the extent to which their comparative significance has changed over time. In the second main section, the existence of relationships between variables is examined and the presence of underlying groupings of attributes is analysed. In the final main section, the qualitative data produced by the written responses to the open questions, contained in questionnaires A and B, is scrutinised and interpreted for insights pertaining to age stereotypes.

The relationship between stereotypes and various demographic variables is not addressed in this chapter. Instead, the question of 'who is stereotyping whom' is discussed as part of the next chapter. Equally, linkages between 'age stereotypes' and 'reasons for discriminating' will also be addressed in a subsequent chapter.

6.2. The Nature of Specific Age Stereotypes

Stereotyping has been described as "the tendency to assign attributes to someone solely on the basis of a category in which that

person has been placed" (Hellriegal et a, 1995:87). We already have a firm view of the constitution of the 'categories' (i.e. older and younger workers) used as a reference point for age stereotyping. However, the particular attributes that are assigned are generally less well understood. In this section the relative severity, popularity and stability of the specific age-based attributes or generalisations presented in section 3 of questionnaire A are discussed. The issue of 'severity' is considered in the following sub-section using mean scores as a basis for analysis. Then, 'popularity' is assessed using the frequency distribution of responses. And finally, the mean scores for the 1990 and 1995 cohorts are compared using ANOVA in order to establish whether particular attributes/stereotypes have moderated, intensified or remained static.

6.2.1. The Severity of Age Stereotypes

The mean score for each item in the age stereotype listing was calculated. This calculation was based upon the whole sample (n=248). The five point Likert scale was constructed in such a way that a mean score of exactly 3.00 represented the mid-point on the scale and, therefore, indicated the point of neutrality or uncertainty. A score in excess of 3 indicated that the respondents tended to disagree with the particular stereotype presented and the nearer to 5 a given score is, the greater the degree of dissent. Scores below 3 indicated agreement with the steretype and the nearer to 1 the greater the strength of agreement. The scaling was reversed for non-stereotypical (or 'neutral') statements (e.g. where disagreement indicated a stereotypical attitude). The reversing process meant that

the interpretation of results remained straightforward and consistent; in all instances a low score (i.e. less that 3) indicated a stereotypical attitude and a high score (over 3) indicated a non-stereotypical attitude.

The results of this analysis are summarised in table 6.1. (see overleaf). The statements are presented in rank order according to the level of agreement with the stereotypical statement (or the level of disagreement with the neutral statements). In short, the highest ranked represents the 'most stereotypical' and the lowest the 'least stereotypical'.

One of the most striking aspects of the findings contained in table 6.1 is the generally low level of age stereotyping. Out of 17 statements only four have an average lower than 3.00 and therefore, at an aggregated level, offer support for age stereotypes. In the majority of instances the mean scores suggest that respondents are inclined to reject the stereotypical images presented. This view is reinforced by the 'mean of means' (i.e. the average of all responses across all items), which, at 3.40, is indicative of a general repudiation of age stereotypes. Nevertheless we must bear in mind that these results have thus far been considered at a collective level. The fact that the majority of respondents disagree with the majority of stereotypes, although interesting at a broad level, is only one facet of the results.

Table 6.1 - Ranked Means for Age Stereotype Statements

Mean Score	Rank Order	Statement
2.75	1	(9) Effective communication and interpersonal skills improve with age.
2.78	2	(2) Older workers are more stable and loyal to an employer than younger workers.
2.92*	3	(7) There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change.
2.98	4	(10) Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers.
3.04	5	(5) Younger workers are less cautious than older workers.
3.09	6	(4) Flexibility is generally greater among younger workers than older workers.
3.24*	7	(16) Leadership skills do not improve or decline according to an individual's age.
3.25	8	(14) The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older.
3.30	9	(12) Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts.
3.41	10	15) Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.
3.53*	11	(3) Job performance is unaffected and unrelated to age.
3.79*	12	(6) As a worker ages it does not directly impair or improve his/her problem solving and decision making ability.
3.89	13	(13) Productivity and work output both decline with age.
3.91	14	(1) Motivation tends to decline with age.
3.91	15	(8) Older workers lack innovation and creativity.
4.00	16	(11) Absence levels tend to be higher for older workers.
4.03	17	(17) Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts.

*Note - These items, as neutral statements, are reversed. Therefore, a low score (i.e. under 3.00) = disagreement and a high score (over 3.00) = agreement.

A further interesting and perhaps unexpected aspect of the results presented in table 6.1. is the evident support for older workers. The two highest ranked age stereotypes project positive images of older workers. They are seen as (1) better communicators who possess good interpersonal skills and are (2) more stable and loyal. Equally, the five least supported stereotypes are derogatory views of older workers which in itself provide further corroboration of a general regard for older workers. Respondents strongly rejected the notion that older workers: (1) make more mistakes; (2) have higher levels of absence; (3) lack innovation and creativity; (4) are less motivated, and; (5) less productive.

Although offering insights into the general severity of age stereotyping and the relative severity of particular items, mean scores can be somewhat misleading on occasions. In particular, they do not provide any insights into dispersal. For example, in the present study it is possible for an item, where the distribution of responses was 50% 'strongly disagree' and 50% 'strongly agree', to have exactly the same mean as another item where the distribution was 96% 'unsure', 2% 'agree' and 2% 'disagree'. As this example illustrates, the mean might be the same, but the inferences drawn from the frequency distributions may be very different. It is to the latter that we now turn our attention.

6.2.1. The Popularity of Age Stereotypes

The percentage distribution of responses are presented in table 6.2. (see overleaf). Not unexpectedly, the responses attracting the largest

Table 6.2 - Distribution of Responses to Age Stereotype Statements

Statement	Distribution of Responses (%)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Dis-agree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Motivation tends to decline with age.	1.2	10.5	8.1	53.6	26.2
(2) Older workers are more stable and loyal to an employer than younger workers.	5.2	45.2	15.7	29 4	3.6
(3) Job performance is unaffected and unrelated to age.	13.3	50.4	13.3	21.8	1.2
(4) Flexibility is generally greater among younger workers than older workers.	3.6	35.1	14.1	41.1	5.6
(5) Younger workers are less cautious than older workers.	2.0	35.9	20.6	39.1	2.4
(6) As a worker ages it does not directly impair or improve his/her problem solving and decision making ability.	10.5	68.5	9.7	11.3	0.0
(7) There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change.	3.2	33.5	17.7	43.1	2.4
(8) Older workers lack innovation and creativity.	2.0	4.4	9.3	68.5	15.7
(9) Effective communication and interpersonal skills improve with age.	6.0	44.4	19.8	27.8	2.0
(10) Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers.	1.2	41.5	18.1	36.3	2.8
(11) Absence levels tend to be higher for older workers.	0.0	1.6	14.1	67.3	16.9
(12) Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts.	2.0	23.4	23.8	43.5	7.3
(13) Productivity and work output both decline with age.	0.4	4.8	15.3	64.1	15.3
(14) The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older.	0.8	18.5	37.1	41.9	1.6
(15) Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.	4.4	15.7	20.6	52.8	6.5
(16) Leadership skills do not improve or decline according to an individual's age	5.2	44.0	19.8	29.4	1.2
(17) Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts.	0.0	0.4	10.1	75.4	14.1

percentages tended to equate to the mean score rankings. For example, 75.4% of respondents 'disagreed', and a further 14.1% 'strongly disagreed', with the statement that: "older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts" (item no. 17). As a consequence of the overwhelming rejection of this assertion, it had the highest mean score at 4.03 and ranked as least stereotypical. A similar pattern was found for the other statements occupying the bottom six places of the ranking (see table 6.1). In each instance the combined proportion of 'disagrees' and 'strongly disagrees' accounted for somewhere between 79% and 85% of the total item response. This offered further resounding support for the refutation of many of the typical stereotypes associated with older workers.

The strength of opinion regarding the positive images of older working, which occupied the top two places on the mean rankings, was less emphatic. Those agreeing/strongly agreeing that "communication and interpersonal skills improve with age " (item 9) represented 50% (44% 'agree' and 6% 'strongly agree') of the responses. Equally, the notion that "older workers are more stable and loyal" (item 2), accounted for 50% (45% 'agree' and 5% 'strongly agree') of the responses. In both cases there was a reasonably significant proportion of counterveiling responses to the majority one: 30% of respondents 'disagreed/strongly disagreed' with the 'pro-older workers' perception of communication and interpersonal skills and 36% 'disagreed/strongly disagreed' with the view that older workers are more stable and loyal.

The notion of an opposing body of dissent becomes more prominent among the middle section of rankings. This phenonemon was not revealed by the analysis of means, but it is nevetheless important insofar as it shows that there is a caucus of respondents who, while not constituting the majority, still represent a signficant proportion of respondents who hold stereotypical attitudes in relation to age. One obvious example of this is the assertion that "older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts" (item 12). Although half the respondents (50.8%) 'disagree/strongly disagree' with this statement, a quarter of respondents (25.4%) 'agreed/strongly agreed' with it. Similarly, 64% of respondents 'agreed/strongly agreed' that "job performance is unaffected and unrelated to age" (item 3), but almost 1 in 4 respondents (23%) took the opposing view of job performance.

Even more marked illustrations of counterbalancing support for age stereotypes were found for two items regarding younger workers (items 4 and 5). Answers to both suggest the differences between the majority and minority view were marginal. Thus, 39% disagreed and 36% agreed with the statement that "younger workers are less cautious"; and 41% disagreed and 35% agreed that "flexibility is generally greater among younger workers."

In two notable instances the 'pro younger workers' stereotypical view crossed over from forming a significant minority to becoming the most popular view. First, 43% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed

that "young workers are more willing to take risks" (item 10) compared to 39% who disagreed/strongly disagreed. Second, 46% challenged the neutral statement that "there is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change" (item 7) compared to 37% who indicated support for this view.

The analysis of the distribution of responses leads to two main conclusions. First, and in line with the analysis of mean scores, the results indicate that age stereotypical views are not widely held. This is demonstrated by the general distribution of responses: out of the 17 statements, the non-stereotypical responses represent the majority in 13 of the statements. Second, although age stereotypes are not common place, this analysis of responses shows that there is a significant 'hard core' of respondents who hold age stereotypical views. In addition to being in the majority in four statements (i.e. items 2, 7, 9 and 10), the stereotypical view accounts for least 20% of the total responses in a further six statements (items 3,4,5,12,15 and 16) and as such constitutes a significant minority.

6.2.3 The Temporal Stability of Age Stereotypes

As pointed out in the earlier macro-level analysis of changing attitudes (see section 5.3.2, Chapter 5), six out of the seventeen items forming the pool of stereotypical statements were found to have statistically significant differences between the mean scores for 1990 and 1995. The complete results of an ANOVA comparison of the 1990 and 1995 means scores are contained in table 6.3 (see overleaf).

Table 6.3 - ANOVA Results for the Age Stereotype Comparison Between the 1990 and 1995 Cohorts

Statements	1990 Mean	1995 Mean	F Probability (Significance)
(1) Motivation tends to decline with age.	3.635	4.068	.0007***
(2) Older workers are more stable and loyal to an employer than younger workers.	2.941	2.706	.0979
(3) Job performance is unaffected and unrelated to age.	3.483	3.553	.6078
(4) Flexibility is generally greater among younger workers than older workers.	2.671	3.307	.0000***
(5) Younger workers are less cautious than older workers.	2.977	3.074	.4525
(6) As a worker ages it does not directly impair or improve his/her problem solving and decision making ability.	3.835	3.755	.4440
(7) There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change.	2.659	3.055	.0027**
(8) Older workers lack innovation and creativity.	3.753	4.000	.0172*
(9) Effective communication and inter-personal skills improve with age.	2.635	2.816	.1748
(10) Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers.	2.800	3.074	.0349*
(11) Absence levels tend to be higher for older workers.	3.977	4.006	.7186
(12) Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts.	3.059	3.436	.0037**
(13) Productivity and work output both decline with age.	3.800	3.939	.1536
(14) The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older.	3.2941	3.2270	.5322
(15) Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.	3.482	3.374	.4095
(16) Leadership skills do not improve or decline according to an individual's age.	3.271	3.221	.7075
(17) Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts.	4.024	4.037	.8455

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

As with table 6.1, the higher the mean score in table 6.3 the less stereotypical the attitude towards older and/or younger workers.

There are several interesting features of the findings. First, with just over a third of all statements (35%) showing statistically significant differences (i.e. greater than $p<.05$) between the 1990 and 1995, age stereotypes cannot be deemed to be fixed and, therefore, stable over time. Secondly, on the basis of 'straight probability' we might expect that on a roughly equal number of the 1995 means to be higher and lower than for the 1990 cohort (ie. 8 or 9 out of the 17 items). In fact, twelve of the items has higher means for 1995 which in itself indicates that attitudes are generally less stereotypical, albeit marginally so in some cases. Thirdly, all of the six items with statistically siginficant mean differences share the same directional relationship - they all have greater mean scores for the 1995 cohort. This finding is consistent with both the two previous ones. It demonstrates that a substantial proportion of age stereotypes exhibit change, but, more importantly, that these shifting attitudes are aligned insofar as they all point to a decline in the general popularity of stereotypical views of older and younger workers.

These findings strongly refute the assertion made in hypothesis 5, namely:

> **Stereotypical images of older and younger workers are relatively stable and do not substantially alter over time.**

Age stereotypes were found to alter over time and far from representing random fluctuations around relatively fixed underlying attitudes, the analysis demonstrated a consistent and coherent shift toward less ageist views.

Having considered the broader insights provided by table 6.3, it is to the specific indices of attitudinal movement (i.e. the six statistically significant items) that we can now turn our attention. A pattern can be discerned about the focus of attitudinal changes. The six statements in order of significance are:

1. Flexibility is generally greater among younger workers than older workers [4].

2. Motivation tends to decline with age [1].

3. There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change [7]. (This item is reverse scored, therefore, read as "there is a difference").

4. Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts [12].

5. Older workers lack innovation and creativity.[8].

6. Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers [10].

The common feature of all of these statements is that they convey either positive sentiments about younger workers or negative ones about older workers. In this regard they occupy the same attitudinal ground, because a positive statement about a younger worker can also be construed as being a negative one about an older worker and vice versa. The nature of the change towards a reduction in these stereotypical attitudes suggest that derogatory views of older workers are declining and so too are positive images of younger workers. In short, this means that the changing nature of age stereotypes has simultaneously benefitted older workers and had an adverse impact upon younger workers.

6.3. The Degree of Association Between Age Stereotypes

There are two aspects to exploring the association between item responses. First, in the following section correlation is used to explore the relationship between particular stereotypical items on the basis of paired comparisons. Second, factor analysis, as a multivariate technique, is used in the subsequent section to examine clusters, rather than pairs, of items in order to establish whether any latent variables exist.

6.3.1. Connections Between Age Stereotypical Items

The results of calculating the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients, for all 17 items, are contained in table 6.4. (overleaf). It should be noted that here the application of correlation is limited to the stereotypes themselves; correlations between stereotypes and a

Table 6.4 - Correlation Matrix of Age Stereotype Statements

	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	ST5	ST6	ST7	ST8	ST9	ST10	ST11	ST12	ST13	ST14	ST15	ST16	ST17
ST1	1.00																
ST2	0.20	1.00															
ST3	-0.12	-0.01	1.00														
ST4	0.34	0.20	-0.08	1.00													
ST5	0.27	0.37	-0.14	0.30	1.00												
ST6	-0.04	-0.14	0.11	-0.10	-0.06	1.00											
ST7	-0.16	-0.18	0.11	-0.50	-0.17	0.22	1.00										
ST8	0.35	0.15	-0.13	0.19	0.17	-0.08	-0.16	1.00									
ST9	0.16	0.33	-0.01	0.16	0.25	-0.07	-0.14	0.01	1.00								
ST10	0.30	0.34	-0.14	0.40	0.52	-0.08	-0.32	0.29	0.28	1.00							
ST11	0.15	0.00	-0.17	0.26	0.09	-0.16	-0.19	0.19	0.07	0.17	1.00						
ST12	0.37	0.13	-0.20	0.39	0.25	-0.11	-0.35	0.38	0.12	0.37	0.27	1.00					
ST13	0.33	0.16	-0.22	0.24	0.24	-0.17	-0.21	0.39	0.15	0.32	0.32	0.52	1.00				
ST14	0.21	0.42	-0.02	0.11	0.35	-0.13	-0.03	0.09	0.51	0.35	0.04	0.13	0.17	1.00			
ST15	0.21	0.52	-0.07	0.17	0.44	-0.03	-0.11	0.17	0.34	0.41	0.05	0.22	0.28	0.51	1.00		
ST16	-0.06	-0.08	0.22	-0.01	-0.10	0.23	0.12	-0.04	0-.23	-0.06	-0.09	-0.13	-0.13	-0.07	-0.10	1.00	
ST17	0.31	0.18	-0.16	0.22	0.26	-0.13	-0.17	0.35	0.01	0.32	0.38	0.35	0.51	0.11	0.20	-0.02	1.00

range of demographic variables have been undertaken, but are presented in the next chapter.

As can be seen from the matrix, the highest correlation recorded was 0.52 and of the 136 co-efficients derived (excluding the 17 comparisons of an item with itself), 10 were 0.40 or above. The correlations which exceeded 0.50 (either '+' or '-') are presented below in table 6.5

Table 6.5 - A Comparison of Significant Correlations Between Age Stereotypical Resonses

r	Statement Combination	
0.52	(2) Older workers are more stable loyal to an employer than younger workers.	(15) Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.
0.52	(5) Younger workers are less cautious than older workers.	(10) Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers.
0.51	(9) Effective communication and interpersonal skills improve with age.	(14) The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older.
0.51	(13) Productivity and work output both both decline with age.	(17) Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts.
0.51	(14) The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older.	(15) Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.
-0.50	(4) Flexibility is generally greater among younger workers than older workers.	(7) There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change.

The six pairings of item correlations contained in table 6.5 have some obvious connections. For example, it is not entirely surprising that respondents who see younger workers as 'less cautious' also suggest that they are 'more willing to take risks.' It could be argued that being less cautious is in itself risk taking. Similarly, if respondents

either agree or disagree that 'productivity/work output' declines with age, their positive or negative view tends to be carried over to their position about 'older workers making more mistakes at work.' As with the previous example, 'more mistakes' and 'less productivity', in many instances, can be seen as synonymous. The only combination which does not appear to have a transparent relationship is the common ground occupied between 'communication/interpersonal skills' and 'the quality of an individual's work'.

Apart from the obviousness of most of the significant correlations, there are three further insights provided by table 6.5. First, in terms of construct validity, the relatively high correlations between two pairs of items suggests that respondents have read the statements carefully and considered their responses, otherwise they would not have exhibited such a degree of consistency.

Secondy, some of the pairings contain mixed statements - e.g. 'older workers are stable and loyal' along side 'younger workers are not as reliable and dependable' - which indicates that the positive and negative attributes of older and younger workers are seen as being diametrically opposed. This confirms the earlier supposition in this thesis that a negative stereotypical statement about a younger worker can also be interpreted as implicitly being a positive one about an older worker (and vice versa).

Finally, the mutual association of pairs of attributes alludes to the possibility that they might form part of a 'meta-attribute(s)'. It is to

this idea that sets of variables may exist that we now turn our attention.

6.3.2. Clusters of Stereotypes: The Search for Latent Variables

The examination of latent variables was undertaken statistically using the 'factor analysis'. As suggested earlier, factor analysis consists of a bundle of procedures designed to account for the association among a set of variables (in this case stereotypical attributes) in terms of relatively few underlying dimensions or factors. Details of the application of the technique, its strengths and limitations, and its appropriateness to this analysis, are provided in the methodology chapter (see section 4.4.3., Chapter 4).

In terms of the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis, the correlation matrix (see table 6.5.) verifies that the highly undesirable properties of 'multicollinearity' and 'singularity' (Stevens, 1992) were not present. Furthermore, the 'Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy' - which should not be less than about 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed - was 0.83. And finally, the 'Bartlett Test of Sphericity' was reassuringly significant at 0.00001. If the associated probability is greater than 0.05, "there is a danger that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix (i.e. the diagonal elements are 1 and the off-diagonal elements are 0) and is therefore unsuitable for factor analysis" (Kinnear and Gray, 1994:222). To summarise, the recognised tests show that the age stereotype data is well suited to factor analysis.

The results of the first stage of factor analysis - a matrix of correlation coefficients, generated for all variable combinations - are already contained in table 6.5. The results of the second stage, the extraction of factors using the 'principal components' method, are presented below (see table 6.6.).

Table 6.6 - Principal Components Matrix for Age Stereotype Factors

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
STEREO1	.55807			
STEREO2	.52576			
STEREO3				
STEREO4	.57017			-.60349
STEREO5	.61183			
STEREO6			.58868	
STEREO7				.64074
STEREO8				
STEREO9		.52176		
STEREO10	.70710			
STEREO11				
STEREO12	.64189			
STEREO13	.64439			
STEREO14		.60195		
STEREO15	.59421			
STEREO16			.72029	
STEREO17	.56216			

As can be seen from the table, four factors were extracted. It should be noted that the greater the value of a specific item's co-ordinate (or 'loading') on a factor, the more important the factor is in accounting for the correlations between the items and other items. It should also be noted that, as is the general convention, items with a loading of less than 0.5 have been surpressed. The pertinent eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained by each of these factors were:

Factor	Eigen-value	Variance (%)	Cummulative Variance (%)
1	4.52364	26.6	26.6
2	2.01890	11.9	38.5
3	1.33640	7.9	46.3
4	1.21543	7.1	53.5

The final stage of rotating the factors (using the 'varimax' method), which maximised the relationships between variables and some of the factors, produced the final results (see table 6.7.). In order to meaningfully interpret these results, it may be helpful to commence the discussion on a factor-by-factor basis.

Table 6.7 - Varimax Rotated Matrix for Age Stereotype Factors

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
STEREO1		.52854		
STEREO2	.70330			
STEREO3				
STEREO4			.80130	
STEREO5	.59870			
STEREO6				.61694
STEREO7			-.82029	
STEREO8		.67055		
STEREO9	.66009			
STEREO10	.52495			
STEREO11				
STEREO12		.61167		
STEREO13		.74203		
STEREO14	.79060			
STEREO15	.76333			
STEREO16				.76150
STEREO17		.74165		

Factor 1 produced significant loadings on six items and was labelled as the 'pro-older workers' factor. The reason for this becomes

apparent when the item descriptions forming factor 1, along with their respective loadings, are viewed together:

Factor 1 - "Pro-older workers"

.7906 (14) The quality of an individual's work improves as she/he becomes older.

.7633 (15) Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.

.7033 (2) Older workers are more stable and loyal to an employer than younger workers.

.6601 (9) Effective communication and inter-personal skills improve with age.

.5987 (5) Younger workers are less cautious than older workers.

.5250 (10) Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers.

The overriding theme to this positive view of older workers seems to be associated with aspects of experience and settledness, and what might therefore be encompassed by the term 'maturity'. This can be demonstrated if we review the items which constitute this factor. First, 'improvements in the quality of an individual's work' (item 14) are most likely to be attributable to a thorough knowledge of the job (i.e. experience) and possibly adopting a steady pace rather than rushing the task. Second, 'reliability and dependability' (item 15) and 'stability and loyalty' (item 2) engender connotations of settledness and, hence, are clearly assocated with the construct of 'maturity'. Third, 'effective communication and interpersonal skills' (item 9) can be seen as improving with experience, but also maturity suggests a more considered and diplomatic approach to social interaction, whereas immaturity typically involves spontaneous,

direct and often more confrontational or aggressive modes of social exchange. Finally, within the context of this factor, the perception that younger workers are 'less cautious' and 'more willing to take risks' (item 10) is viewed as a weakness. Here this kind of behaviour is framed as being impetuous, overly exhuberant and demonstrating an inability to meaningfully weigh up the alternatives and/or consider the implications of one's actions. In short, it is a sign of 'immaturity'.

Factor 2, which produced significant loadings on five items, was labelled as the 'anti-older workers' factor. By contrast to factor 1, which projects older workers as mature and experienced assets, factor 2 casts them in a very different light:

Factor 2 - "Anti-older workers"

.7420 (13) Productivity and work output both decline with age.

.7417 (17) Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts.

.6705 (8) Older workers lack innovation and creativity.

.6117 (12) Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts.

.5285 (1) Motivation tends to decline with age.

The implication of this factor is that older workers are: slow, have lapses of concentration, set in their ways, and forgetful. Collectively, the items which form factor 2, seem to draw on images of the 'aged' (i.e. over 65) to stereotype older workers (i.e. under 65) in terms of

mental and physical decline. Older workers are stigmatised as being, or moving towards being, senile and decrepit.

Factors 3 and 4, by comparison to factors 1 and 2, accounted for far less of the total variance explained and contained fewer items:

Factor 3 - "Change orientation"

-.8203 (7) There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change.

.8013 (4) Flexibility is generally greater among younger workers than older workers.

Factor 4 - "No difference"

.7615 (16) Leadership skills do not improve or decline according to an individual's age.

.6169 (6) As a worker ages it does not directly impair or improve his/her problem solving and decision making ability.

Factor 3 was labelled 'change orientation' because the two item statements respectively referred to 'resistance to change' (item 7) and 'flexibility' (item 4). The implication is that younger workers are more receptive to change than their older counterparts. This could be viewed in either positive or negative terms, however, the 'hyper-turbulent' (Harvey and Brown 1990) nature of the environment within which most organisations operate would suggest that those who embrace change are favoured over those who resist it.

This factor is interesting insofar as (unlike the previous two) it does not directly relate to the perceptions of individual's performance potential or personal effectiveness. Instead, it seems to concern the

degree of fit with the organisation (or organisational culture) rather than the degree of fit with the job. This might explain why rapidly changing organisations and relatively dynamic industries tend to be over populated by younger workers. One illustration might be the computer industry, where in the UK, "only eight out of every 100 IT workers are over the age of 40" (Smith, 1996:36).

Factor 4 was labelled as the 'no difference' factor due to the neutrality of views expressed. In terms of their 'problem solving/decision making ability' (item 6) and 'leadership skills' (item 16) there is generally perceived to be no difference between older and younger workers.

This factor is probably the least interesting, but is nevertheless significant. It demonstrates that there are certain mainstream work-related attributes/skills which are viewed as being totally unrelated or affected by age.

If we return to factors 1 and 2 - which given their explanatory power are most statistically significant factors - we have two distinct clusters of age stereotypical items. First, a grouping of positive views about older workers (or what can also correspondingly be seen as a set of negative views about younger workers) which primarily focus on 'maturity' as the major asset. And second, an anti-older workers (or pro-younger workers) grouping which contentrates on physcial and mental degengeration. These two factors offer strong empirical support for hypotheses 3 and 4, namely that:

H3 - There is a cluster of stereotypical attributes associated with older workers

H4 - There is a cluster of stereotypical attributes associated with younger workers.

Factor analysis offers unequivocal evidence that two clusters exist. The significance of this finding is that it demonstrates that those who hold a particular age stereotypical view (i.e. older workers are more difficult to train) do not tend to hold the view in isolation, instead it forms part of a choate package or bundle or stereotypical views (e.g. factor 1).

6.4 Discursive Insights into Age Stereotypes

The insights into age stereotypes discussed in this section are derived from the short written accounts provided by respondents answering two questions. The first (question 1 from section 4 of questionnaire A) being: "Do you feel that the use of age limits in job advertisements leads to age discrimination?" And, the second (question 1 of questionnaire B) being: "Do you think age discrimination in employment is justifiable?"

As can be seen from the wording of these two questions, neither has been formulated with the explicit intention of gathering data pertaining to age stereotyping. Therefore, we might expect that only

a limited number of the responses will have "age stereotype" connotations.

The texts which encompassed relevant data tended to do so in two distinct ways. First, instances of direct reference to the stereotyping process arose where the respondents answering question 1 of questionnaire A posited a firm connection between age stereotypes and age discrimination. This linkage was discussed earlier in chapter 5 (see section 5.2.1.) and will not therefore be elaborated upon here.

Second, and of far more discursive interest, were the replies given to question 1 of questionnaire B which offered insights into the nature of stereotyping. Responses in this category were 'implicit' insofar as they rarely directly acknowledged that they were generating age stereotypes; instead they were inclined to present their age-related assertions as 'reasons'. In etymological terms, it is not likely to prove fruitful at this juncture to get too deeply involved in the semantics of what constitutes a 'stereotype' and what constitutes a 'reason'. However, given the following extracts are based upon generalisations (whether complimentory or derogatory) about older and younger workers we will, for now, treat them as being stereotypical.

The generalisations made fell into two categories: those which privileged older workers and those which privileged younger workers. The respective categories resembled the characteristics incapsulated within factors 1 and 2 derived from the factor analysis.

Just like the 'pro-older workers' grouping (factor 1), a number of responses highlighted a positive association between stability/maturity/experience and older workers. The directness of the accounts given varied from hinting at a relationship through to openly stating a connection. For example, responses to the question "Do you think age discrimination is justifiable? And, why?" included:

> Rarely - Age discrimination is only justifiable when there are genuine reasons for applying age limits. For example when a person is unlikely to have the necessary experience for a job below a certain age. Even so, should think very carefully before setting age limits [B3].
>
> Sometimes - A tedious dead-end job to a youth may be exactly what a 50 yr old guy running down to retirement wants. The organisation may benefit in terms of stability, etc. Other e.g.'s exist [B6].
>
> Often - You sometimes want people to be able to do certain jobs that require a young person or an older and mature person, someone who would stay and not go too quickly [B7].
>
> Sometimes - Experience held by older applicants/employees is invaluable [B13].
>
> Never - Because it means experienced employees are considered unsuitable for promotion. Inexperienced young men are promoted to supervise employees who are better at the job - causes ill feeling [B14].
>
> Sometimes - With reference to level of experience e.g. 18 yr old social worker won't have same level of experience or respect(?) necessary for dealing with some problems [B34].
>
> Sometimes - Maturity and experience [B55].
>
> Sometimes - Certain professions need an amount of experience to give credibility [B65].
>
> Sometimes - Experience may necessitate [B83].

The 'anti-older worker', or 'pro-younger worker' responses, seemed to correspond with factor 2 of the factor analysis insofar as they either directly or indirectly posited a link between physical ability and younger workers:

Sometimes - Physical demands of job is a reason to consider [B1].

Sometimes - Physically demanding work,for example. Could also be used to prevent young people being employed. Age could mean young or old [B2].

Rarely - Some jobs do not suit certain age groups, eg heavy work (physical) for older people [B4].

Rarely - There may be some occupations which require particular physical strength or like GOQ may be a job where building relationships with peers is essential [B5].

Sometimes - Certain employment requirements may require stronger younger people [B9].

Sometimes - For some duties it is unfair I believe to ask some individuals to complete strenuous duties and sometimes security reasons aswell [B30].

Sometimes - Age discrimination is sometimes justifiable where medical problems may arise as a result of job and older people potentially are at greater risk of straining joints, stress more harmful, etc [B35].

Rarely - Because age discrimination is a method used to 'box' people into categories and this should only be used in rare situations (i.e. heavy work) [B39].

Sometimes - In the case of a security of it is much better to have a younger healthy looking person than an old person [B52].

Sometimes - A job that requires a high degree of physical energy would not be ideally suited for a 70 yr old in most cases [B53].

Sometimes - Impairment of faculties e.g. judgements over sight and hearing, reactions for drivers. Necessary to relate to certain age groups e.g. bouncers/stewards at pop concerts. Degree of fitness needed for some jobs, etc [B54].

Rarely - Some professions (e.g. air hostess) require a certain youthful attractiveness and appearance. Also some jobs require physical/mental alertness (e.g. pilot) which the ageing process undermines [B57].

Sometimes - Fitness [B68].

Rarely - If the work required a high degree of fitness [B69].

Sometimes - Certain jobs require long hours at a fast rate, with much travel and little sleep - characteristics which I believe would better suit a young man 20-45 [B74].

Sometimes - Jobs with physical exertion content would be better suited to a younger person [B88].

Finally, there were instances where respondents simultaneously pigeon-holed older workers as 'experienced' and younger workers as more 'physically able':

> Sometimes - Occasionally the physical aspect determines the age. Sometimes a skill is gained by experience and in some roles the skill is essential to the task e.g. professional jobs [B22].
>
> Sometimes - Physical ability can be affected by age. Inexperience due to youth, could affect ability [B44].
>
> Sometimes - Because younger may be more suitable or elder managers may have more experience/maturity [B49].
>
> Sometimes - People of particular age groups may be incapable of doing certain jobs i.e. physical work or need for experience [B63].
>
> Sometimes - Position may not be suitable to an older/younger candidate. Position may be more of a trainee nature/need experience. Age can be a problem both ways sometimes [B80]!
>
> Sometimes - Depending on the type of job - experience needed, physical condition, maturity [B82].

Given that the question was broadly framed, it is rather surprising that 31 out of 97 responses (i.e. almost a third) have choosen to focus on 'experience' and/or 'physical ability'. In this respect, the results of this analysis of the discourse employed by respondents answering the question seems to corroborate the existence of the two latent variables identified through the application of factor analysis. It is also important to remember that the factor analysis used data from questionnaire A while the corrseponding discursive insights came from questionnaire B. This means that the inferences drawn here cannot simply be dismissed as the same respondents expressing the same attitude twice given that the two data sources are independent

samples. In this sense we have relatively reliable evidence of quantative and qualitative triangulation which supports hypotheses 4 and 5.

The issue of whether the assertion that 'older workers are generally more experienced' and 'younger workers are more physically able' are unwarranted stereotypical assumptions or legitimate insights remains unresolved. Therefore, the extent to which these age-related views constitute valid criteria for making employment decisions is also still unresolved. This point of contention will be considered in chapter 8 where the reasons for discriminating are ostensibly discussed.

6.5. Summary

This chapter has clearly demonstrated that work-related age stereotypes exist. However, these views are not widely held for only 4 out of the 17 stereotypical items have mean scores which indicate agreement/strong agreement with the particular age stereotypes presented (see table 6.1.) Furthermore, the general distribution of responses reveals that non-stereotypical attitudes form the majority in 13 out of the 17 statements (see table 6.2.) This, however, is only part of the picture. Although those who agree with age stereotypes are in the minority, they still constitute a significant proportion of employers; the stereotypical view accounted for at least 20% of the total responses in 10 out of the 17 statements and, therefore, age stereotyping cannot simply be dismissed as a marginalised and out dated phenomenon.

Hypothesis 5, which asserts that age stereotypes are relatively stable and do not substantially alter over time, was not supported by the research findings. The analysis shows that a substantial proportion of age stereotypes (i.e. 35%) exhibited statistically significant levels of change and that the direction of change was consistent with a marked reduction in the incidence of age stereotyping. More importantly, given that both derogatory views of older workers and positive views of younger workers are declining, the changing nature of age stereotypes has primarily benefitted older workers.

Turning to the question of the association between stereotypes, the application of factor analysis to the stereotype data produced four factors; two of which had particularly high explanatory power. First, a 'pro-older workers' factor (factor 1) encompassed positive attributes primarily associated with stability, maturity and experience. Second, factor 2 drew upon negative images of older workers incorporating assumptions about physical and mental deterioration. The analysis offered considerable support for hypothesis 3 and 4 which posit the existence of clusters of age stereotypical attibutes. Further corroboration of these quantative results - and therefore additional support for hypotheses 3 and 4 - came from the qualitative analysis of respondents answers to a broad open question about the justifiability of age discrimination. Many of the short accounts provided indicated a positive connection between 'older workers and experience' and 'younger workers and physically demanding work'. The notion that older workers are more experienced equated to the

central tenet of factor 1, while the linkage made between younger workers and physical ability relates to factor 2.

Finally, although this chapter has provided insights into the nature and prevalence of age stereotypes, the relationship between the propensity to stereotype and various demographic factors has not been explored. Equally, the interplay between 'reasons for discriminating' and age stereotypes is not considered. These issues, along with others, will be addressed in the next two chapters.

Chapter 7 - Stakeholders and Ageism: Who is Discriminating Against Whom?

7.1 Introduction

There are two main parts to this chapter. The following main section examines the composition of age groups who are particularly disadvantaged by the ageist attitudes and behaviour of employers. This analysis utilises data produced by the sampling of job advertisements and a number of responses to items contained in questionnaires A and B.

In the second main section the impact of a set of independent demographic variables is assessed in order to ascertain the general characteristics of discriminators and to establish which category (or categories) of employer are most likely to discriminate against employees and prospective employees on the grounds of their chronological age. The data pertaining to the main variables (i.e., gender, age occupation, industrial sector and size of organisation) were generated by applying chi-square and ANOVA to the quantifiable elements of the two research questionnaires.

7.2 The Nature of Disadvantaged Groups

The literature reviewed in chapter 2 highlights indicates that although both younger and older workers encounter age prejudice, it is older workers who are more consistently and severely disadvantaged. On the basis of this body of research evidence hypothesis 2 was developed, namely:

The attitudes towards, and perceptions of, older workers (over 45 yrs old) held by employers are more negative than those held of younger workers (under 35 yrs old).

The findings of the research undertaken within this thesis suggest that the question of who is disadvantaged is far more complex than the past research and the above hypothesis would have us believe. The factor analysis of age stereotypes (see section 6.3.2) and the hermeneutic treatment of responses to the open questions (see section 6.4) contained in the previous chapter indicates that the constitution of disadvantaged age groups is largely context dependent. In particular, if the earlier results regarding the positive connections made between 'experience/stability and older workers' and 'physical ability and younger workers' are accurate, we might expect many ageist employers to discriminate in favour of older workers in some instances (i.e. jobs requiring dependability and maturity) and against them in others (i.e. where heavy manual labour is involved).

7.2.1. Privileged and Marginalised Age Groups

Given the apparently contingent nature of age discrimination in employment it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions which support hypothesis 2. There does, however, seem to be a clear inference regarding the nature of 'advantaged groups'. Unlike older and younger workers - who move in and out of favour in terms of employability -those in the 'golden decade' (Naylor, 1976) of 30-40

years of age are generally perceived as simultaneously having the requisite experience/settledness associated with older workers and the physical agility of younger workers. Hence, the workers in this 'middle band' are rarely negatively stereotyped and, therefore, are seldomly seen as unsuitable for employment on the grounds of age.

The overriding implication of the above discussion is that if we wish to explore the constitution of age groups in terms of their relative level of disadvantage, we should focus on comparisons between the 'advantaged' (i.e. the golden decade) and the 'disadvantaged' (i.e. younger workers and/or older workers) rather than comparisons between two disadvantaged groups. Just as if we were analysing racism in the UK, juxtaposing the plight of Afro-Caribbeans with that of Asians in terms of who is most disadvantaged is odious and largely subjective. Moreover, comparisons between these two marginalised groups would not prove to be as fruitful as those made where the privileged group (i.e. white Anglo-Saxons) is used as a reference point for analysis.

7.2.2 Age Preference and Occupational Grouping

Another way of considering how particular age groups are disadvantaged is through a comparative analysis of occupations. Rather than simply looking at disadvantage in terms of generic age bands this section considers whether ageism is more common place in some occupations than others. In short, it seeks to identify whether there are age disadvantaged occupational groups.

The data source for this examination of disadvantaged occupations is the large sample of job advertisements placed in *The Guardian* newspaper between 1961 and 1992. As highlighted earlier in section 4.3.2, the advertising policy of *The Guardian* means that sector specific advertising appears on certain days of the week. Although the pattern and make up of 'special days' has not remained constant since 1961, the current format has been used since 1984 and this enables several broad occupational groups to be compared from this date onwards. The results of this comparison are presented in table 7.1.

Table 7.1 - The Incidence of Age Limits in Job Advertisements According to Occupational Grouping

Year	Creative, Media, and Marketing		Education		Social Services, Finance and Personnel		Computing, Science and Technology	
	n^1	%[2]	n	%	n	%	n	%
1984	111	13.5	173	2.9	135	3.7	71	7.0
1985	158	13.3	213	0.5	137	2.9	70	14.3
1986	168	10.7	247	3.6	170	1.2	82	15.9
1987	214	8.4	222	1.4	162	3.1	99	12.1
1988	256	9.8	189	0.0	219	4.1	107	4.7
1989	172	11.6	291	1.7	292	2.4	93	4.3
1990	250	10.0	304	1.0	202	0.5	90	4.4
1991	129	7.8	205	1.0	141	0.7	52	7.7
1992	172	11.6	291	1.7	153	2.6	43	9.3
Totals	1630	10.6	2135	1.6	1611	2.4	707	8.6

Notes: (1) = Total no. of advertisements placed; (2) = proportion of total advertisements with age restrictions.

Table 7.1 exhibits a distinct regularity to the use of age limits. The incidence of age restrictions is both consistently and significantly higher for 'creative, media and marketing' and 'computing, science and technology' jobs than it is for either 'education' or 'social services, finance and personnel' jobs. Indeed, the relative proportions for the two groupings where the use of age limits is more frequent are higher for each of the 9 years surveyed.

This research provides support for the assertion that older and/or younger workers located within certain occupations (e.g. marketing) are more likely to be disadvantaged than those located in others (e.g. education).

There also appears to be an industry-based pattern to the use of age limits. 'Creative, media and marketing' and 'computing, science and technology' are disciplines which could be described as dynamic and subject to rapid change. Or to use Burns and Stalker's classic continuum (1962) they can be thought of as being associated with 'organic' organisations. By contrast, education, social services and personnel can be thought of as being of a more stable and 'mechanistic' nature. 'Finance' has been excluded from this classification because the job advertisements appearing in this area in *The Guardian* are heavily skewed towards public sector appointments, and therefore to talk about it as being a relatively stable occupation would be misleading.

The notion of 'organic' and 'mechanistic' occupations/organisations may well be connected to factor 3 (labelled 'change orientation') in the factor analysis of stereotypes, which indicated that older workers were seen as more change resistant (item 7) and less flexible (item 4). This and other connections between occupations and stereotypes will be more fully explored in chapter 10 once the employers' reasons for age discrimination have also been analysed.

Finally, the results presented in table 7.1. not only have implications for the nature of disadvantaged occupational groups, they also tell us something about the nature of discriminators. This aspect of the results will be discussed as part of the following main section.

7.3. The Characteristics of Discriminators

To begin with, this section adopts a macro perspective by considering at a general level the relative significance of the various demographic variables in relation to: the propensity to age stereotype older and younger workers; perceptions of the acceptability of reasons for age preferences, and; the responses to open questions regarding the legitimacy of age discrimination.

Following the broad comparative analysis of independent variables, a series of more focused sub sections are provided. These sections are intended to offer a deeper factor-by-factor analysis in order to develop more detailed insights into the characteristics of discriminators.

7.3.1. General Demographic Variables: An Overview

From questionnaire A it was possible to examine five main employer-related variables, namely; age, gender, occupation, industrial sector and size of organisation. Questionnaire B, which was restricted to three main variables (e.g. sex, age and occupation), can be viewed as a supplementary source of data given that its primary focus is upon attitudes towards corrective measures for addressing ageism.

One of the main sources of data about the subgroupings of employers' inclination to discriminate on the basis of age is their attitude towards age stereotypes. A breakdown of the significance of each demographic variable in relation to the 17 age stereotypes contained in section 3 of questionnaire A is presented in table 7.2 (see overleaf).

The results suggest that the industrial sector (i.e. public or private) and size of organisation within which a respondent is employed have very little bearing upon their attitudes towards older and younger workers. With seven statistically significant differences, it would seem that gender has a substantial impact upon age related attitudes. The respondents occupation would also seem to have a significant, but less pronounced, influence on age stereotyping. Finally, the age of respondents can be described as having no more than a moderate effect upon attitudes towards stereotypes of older and younger workers.

Table 7.2 - ANOVA Results for Age Stereotypes According to Various Demographic Variables

Stereo-type	Age	Job	Sector	Gender	Org. Size
STEREO1	.0334*	.0071**	.3834	.0691	.1475
STEREO2	.0020**	.0081**	.2162	.0004***	.3511
STEREO3	.9919	.3357	.7484	.1318	.6114
STEREO4	.0260*	.0314*	.4574	.0073**	.0447*
STEREO5	.0679	.1586	.4699	.0002***	.7819
STEREO6	.4149	.2553	.0980	.3366	.5233
STEREO7	.1233	.0080**	.0886	.5825	.4250
STEREO8	.6419	.0075**	.8184	.0703	.3760
STEREO9	.0923	.1581	.9987	.0033**	.1533
STEREO10	.3186	.0608	.7775	.0034**	.9657
STEREO11	.4359	.0883	.3754	.1613	.0644
STEREO12	.4121	.1441	.3030	.4031	.7264
STEREO13	.7444	.1522	.9696	.2182	.8359
STEREO14	.0030**	.1063	.5041	.0001***	.6262
STEREO15	.0284*	.0271*	.8881	.0006***	.0756
STEREO16	.7412	.1766	.0033**	.1465	.4985
STEREO17	.5519	.1112	.2302	.1899	.6902

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

If we turn to the relationship between the acceptability of reasons offered for age preferences and five main variables (see table 7.3 below), we find several similarities with the results reported for age stereotypes. First, the areas of significance are fairly dispersed. Second, 'job' and 'gender' once again feature as the most significant factors. Third, the size of the employing organisation continues to have only a very limited impact. However, in terms of points of

dissimilarity, we find that 'age', which in the previous table had moderate significance, has very little bearing on respondents' assessment of reasons. Correspondingly, 'sector' has moved from low significance in relation to 'stereotypes' to moderate significance for 'reasons'.

Table 7.3 - ANOVA Results for Employer Reasons for Age Preferences According to Various Demographic Variables

Reason	Age	Job	Sector	Gender	Org. Size
(1)PERSONA	.5585	.0746	.0116*	.0247*	.9939
(2)PERSONB	.0044**	.0000***	.4564	.0005***	.3218
(3)PERSONC1	.9844	.0945	.0921	.5768	.1933
(4)PERSONC2	.5775	.0000***	.0338*	.2143	.0952
(5)STRUCTA	.7893	.0271*	.0343*	.0000***	.1109
(6)STRUCTB	.7767	.8944	.0041**	.1567	.2524
(7)STRUCTC	.7650	.0082**	.3812	.0028**	.3110
(8)STRUCTD	.1118	.0121*	.3773	.3161	.5575
(9)WORKA	.5650	.0003***	.0201*	.1233	.0272*
(10)WORKB	.4990	.0033**	.1002	.3545	.2417
(11)OTHERA	.1721	.2820	.1890	.1603	.1386
(12)OTHERB1	.1717	.0001***	.2781	.2405	.0328
(13)OTHERB2	.0449*	.0684	.0623	.0085**	.2337
(14)RTOTAL	.0952	.0000***	.0017**	.0003***	.0145*

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

The responses to the open questions contained in questionnaires A and B produced several points of demographic difference which were found to be statistically significant. The responses for questionnaire A (see table 7.4) showed relevant differences for all three responses

according to industrial sector with the only other two indices of significant difference were accounted for by gender.

Table 7.4 - Chi-Square Results for Responses to Open Questions in Questionnaire A according to Demographic Variables

Question	Age	Job	Sector	Gender	Org. Size
(1) Do you feel that the use of age limits in job ad's leads to age discrimination?	.7000	.2402	.0030**	.8904	.5219
(2) In the US it is illegal to specify age limits in job ad's. Do you feel that similar legislation should be introduced in the UK?	.2857	.6428	.0000***	.0029**	.6548
(3) Overall, are you in favour of, or opposed to, age being used as a criteria in the recruitment process?	.3839	.6128	.0000***	.0074**	.8145

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

Questionnaire B displayed a much more modest pattern of significance than questionnaire A (see table 7.5 below). The only major point of difference related to attitudes toward the introduction of anti-ageist legislation, where respondents' occupation appeared to influence their position on this matter. Given the significance of gender in all three earlier areas of comparison (i.e. tables 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4), it is perhaps a little surprising that it does not feature as a significant variable in table 7.5. Nevertheless, at an aggregated level it would appear that gender along with job occupation, and to a slightly less extent industrial sector, have the greatest bearing upon attitudes towards age discrimination.

Table 7.5 - Chi-Square and ANOVA Results for Responses to Open Questions in Questionnaire B according to Age, Gender and Occupation

Question	Age	Job	Sex
#Q1. Do you think age discrimination in employment is justifiable?	.1930	.5240	.2043
#Q2. Compared to racial and sexual discrimination, do you feel that ageism is more or less of a problem?	.1344	.3103	.7694
^Q3. In the UK racism and sexism are unlawful, should similar legislation be introduced to address ageism?	.2937	.0000***	.1412

Notes: (1) * = significance level (*=$p<.05$, **=$p<.01$, ***=$p<.001$); (2) # = analysed using ANOVA, and; (3) ^ = analysed using chi-square.

Having presented, and briefly explored, the range of demographic results at a collective level, the following subsections present a deeper analysis of each variable. This is necessary because it is not enough to know that, for instance, gender has a statistically significant bearing upon a number of age-related attitudes. We are still unable to answer pertinent questions, such as: What particular facets of ageism are most affected by gender? Do men discriminate more or less than women? And, so on.

7.3.2 Gender and Age Discrimination

The systematic analysis of the data regarding gender-based attitudes towards ageism reveals the significance of this demographic variable is even more marked and emphatic than the above set of general comparisons indicate. Table 7.6 presents the mean scores for male and female respondents in response to the 'age stereotype statements' from section 3 of questionnaire A. As can be seen in the table, the mean scores for women are not only higher for the 7 items

with statistically significant differences, they are in fact higher for all 17 statements. Given that the higher-the-score the less stereotypical the attitude held, these results show that female employers uniformly hold less age stereotypical views than their male counterparts.

Table 7.6 - A Comparison of Age Stereotypes According to Gender

Stereo-type	Mean Score Male[a]	Mean Score Female[b]	Direction and ANOVA Significance
STEREO1	3.77	4.00	a<b
STEREO2	2.49	2.97	a<b***
STEREO3#	2.41	2.61	a<b
STEREO4	2.86	3.24	a<b**
STEREO5	2.76	3.22	a<b***
STEREO6#	2.73	2.83	a<b
STEREO7#	1.88	1.95	a<b
STEREO8	3.80	3.99	a<b
STEREO9	2.52	2.90	a<b**
STEREO10	2.75	3.12	a<b**
STEREO11	3.93	4.04	a<b
STEREO12	3.24	3.35	a<b
STEREO13	3.82	3.94	a<b
STEREO14	3.00	3.41	a<b***
STEREO15	3.15	3.58	a<b***
STEREO16#	2.13	2.31	a<b
STEREO17	3.97	4.07	a<b

Notes: (1) * = significance level (*=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001);
(2) # = age stereotype items adjusted to accommodate reverse scoring system.

The comparison of the acceptability of reasons offered for age preferences undertaken in table 7.7 (see below) also shows an astonishing level of consistency. Once again the mean scores for all 14 items are higher for women respondents than for men. This indicates that female employers also find all of the reasons offered in support of age preferences less acceptable than do male managers.

Table 7.7 - A Comparison of the Acceptability of Reasons for Age Preferences According to Gender

Reason	Mean Score Male[a]	Mean Score Female[b]	Direction and ANOVA Significance
(1)PERSONA	2.20	2.35	a<b*
(2)PERSONB	2.56	2.80	a<b***
(3)PERSONC1	2.24	2.30	a<b
(4)PERSONC2	2.18	2.29	a<b
(5)STRUCTA	2.11	2.42	a<b***
(6)STRUCTB	2.56	2.66	a<b
(7)STRUCTC	2.36	2.58	a<b**
(8)STRUCTD	2.75	2.81	a<b
(9)WORKA	2.21	2.32	a<b
(10)WORKB	1.82	1.89	a<b
(11)OTHERA	2.24	2.37	a<b
(12)OTHERB1	2.53	2.62	a<b
(13)OTHERB2	2.45	2.66	a<b**
(14)RTOTAL	2.34	2.49	a<b***

Note: *=p<.05 **=p<.01 ***=p< 001

These results are nothing short of remarkable. We might expect to find that the majority of questionnaire items exhibit a degree of

coherence, but the probability that 31 out of the 31 items,(i.e. 'stereotypes' and 'reasons') would be entirely consistent must be extremely low.

Hypothesis 8 states that:

> **The gender of an employer is not associated with either the age stereotypical views they hold or their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.**

This association is strongly refuted by the research findings presented above. Furthermore, the responses to the two open questions in questionnaire A, which also displaying statistically significant gender differences (see table 7.4), corroborate the above results. In response to question 2, a greater proportion of women (57%) supported the introduction of anti-ageist legislation when compared to men (46%). Equally, for question 3 more women (77%) indicated that they were opposed to the use of age as a criterion in the recruitment process than men (69%).

With regard to the gender aspect of the question of 'who is discriminating?', the answer is unequivocal: 'it is male employers.' But, why is this so? One of the most plausible explanations relates to the life experience of women. As frequent recipients of gender-based prejudice in employment-related decision making, women have first hand experience of discrimination. This direct exposure highlights the inappropriateness of sex stereotypes and the arbitrary

and detrimental effect of sexism. In turn this may help sensitise women to the issues surrounding ageism and enables them to more readily empathise with those discriminated against on the basis of age.

This reason and the theoretical underpinning for this gender-based imbalance will - along any other highly significant demographic variables which subsequently arise - be considered more fully in chapter 10.

7.3.3. Size of Organisation and Age Discrimination

This variable is probably the easiest one to deal with. Out of all the demographic factors this one has by far the lowest explanatory power. There are only three items throughout the entire range contained in tables 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 which show statistically significant differences according to the size of the employing organisation. Moreover, these three items are of the lowest level of statistical significance (i.e. $p<.05$). With the low frequency and low significance recorded, and the relatively high number of ANOVA calculations being made, it is most likely that these results can be attributed to 'pure chance' rather than to any meaningful relationship.

In summary, the research findings concur with the assertion made in hypothesis 9 that:

The size of organisation within which an employer is located is not associated with either the age stereotypical views they hold or their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

7.3.4 Industrial Sector and Age Discrimination

The classification of sectors used here is a straightforward one with a distinction being made between public sector and private sector organisations. Interestingly, the significance of the sector within which a respondent is located seems to vary according to the point analysis. Sector does not, for instance, appear to have a direct relationship to age stereotyping. It does, however, seem to influence the perception of reasons for age preferences and the general assessment of the legitimacy of age discrimination.

In terms of age stereotypes, 'sector' produced only one point of moderately significant different out of the seventeen points of comparison and had the lowest aggregated level of significance of the five demographic variables analysed. Furthermore, and unlike gender (where women had less stereotypical views on all 17 items), the direction of views was not uniformed; private sector respondents held the more stereotypical view in 10 instances with public sector respondents displaying more stereotypical attitudes for the remaining 7 items. Therefore, the obvious inference is that industrial sector has no significant bearing on attitudes towards age stereotypes.

The findings regarding 'reasons' are very different (see table 7.8). Here we find evidence of substantial differences between the public and private sectors. All of the six reasons with statistically significant differences in mean scores share a common direction. Furthermore, 13 out of the 14 comparisons have higher mean scores for the public sector. These results demonstrate that the public sector respondents consistently found the reasons offered in support of age preferences less acceptable than their peers in the private sector.

Table 7.8 - A Comparison of the Acceptability of Reasons for Age Preferences According to Public and Private Sector Ownership

Reason	Mean Score Public[a]	Mean Score Private[b]	Direction and ANOVA Significance
(1)PERSONA	2.40	2.22	a>b*
(2)PERSONB	2.75	2.70	a>b
(3)PERSONC1	2.40	2.22	a>b
(4)PERSONC2	2.36	2.18	a>b*
(5)STRUCTA	2.41	2.25	a>b*
(6)STRUCTB	2.75	2.55	a>b**
(7)STRUCTC	2.44	2.51	a<b
(8)STRUCTD	2.82	2.77	a>b
(9)WORKA	2.39	2.22	a>b*
(10)WORKB	1.95	1.82	a>b
(11)OTHERA	2.39	2.27	a>b
(12)OTHERB1	2.64	2.55	a>b
(13)OTHERB2	2.69	2.54	a>b
(14)RTOTAL	2.51	2.38	a>b**

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

A further area containing significant sectoral differences is the responses to the open questions in section 4 of questionnaire A. As illustrated earlier in table 7.4, all three questions produced responses which differed significantly according to 'sector'. Table 7.9 shows that in each instance, and in parallel to the 'reasons' responses, it is the public sector respondents who hold the more moderate views regarding attitudes towards ageism.

Table 7.9 - Distribution of Responses to Open Questions in Questionnaire A according to Public and Private Sector Ownership

Question	Public Sector[a]	Private Sector[b]	Direction and Chi-Square Significance
(1) Do you feel that the use of age limits in job ad's leads to age discrimination?	Yes = 88.0% No = 2.4% Unsure = 9.6%	Yes = 79.9% No = 8.4% Unsure = 11.7%	Yes = a>b**
(2) In the US it is illegal to specify age limits in job ad's. Do you feel that similar legislation should be introduced in the UK?	Yes = 62.7% No = 27.7% Unsure =9.6%	Yes = 46.8% No = 39.6% Unsure = 13.6%	Yes = a>b***
(3) Overall, are you in favour of, or opposed to, age being used as a criteria in the recruitment process?	Opposed = 85.9% Favour = 3.6% Unsure = 8.4%	Opposed = 68.6% Favour = 14.4% Unsure = 17.0%	Opp. = a>b***

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

The implication of the above findings is that we have partial support for Hypothesis 7, which states that:

The industrial sector within which an employer is located is associated with the age stereotypical views they hold and their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

Support is partial insofar as there is no evidence to suggest that there is any difference between public sector and private sector employers in terms of their attitudes to age stereotypes. Yet, there is some strong evidence to indicate that significant differences exist between the two sectors, with public sector employers projecting less support for age preferences and a noticeably lower propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.

Further support for the assertion that public sector employers have a lower propensity to discriminate is indirectly provided by the earlier analysis of disadvantaged groups (see section 7.2). The sample of job advertisements taken from *The Guardian* newspaper (presented in table 7.1) reported that age limits were far more prevalent in 'creative, media and marketing' and 'computing, science and technology' jobs than they were for 'education' and 'social services, finance and personnel' jobs. It is the latter categories with lower evidence of age references which predominantly contain public sector advertisements. In addition to the obvious 'public sector' connotations of most educational and social services appointments, further scrutiny of the advertisements placed has revealed that the greater proportion of 'finance' and 'personnel' jobs appearing in *The Guardian* were vacancies within public sector organisations.

The job advertisement results constitute clear evidence of enacted behavioural differences according to sector which corroborate and triangulate with the attitudinal ones uncovered through the questionnaire responses. Both sources show that public sector employers are less likely to condone, or indulge in, age discrimination in the workplace.

An interesting question nevertheless remains: Why, given the significant sectoral differences found elsewhere, are there no substantial differences between the two sectors regarding age stereotypes? The answer perhaps has something to do with the conscious separation of attitudes and behaviour and the broader public sector approach to equality of opportunity. Many public sector organisations adopt an active pro-equality stance which typically includes 'equal opportunities' training for all recruiters. It is likely that a high proportion of public sector respondents have received some form of equal opportunities awareness training. One of the things that this kind of training does is to help participants to become aware of their own inherent prejudices. It also encourages them to separate out their personal views (i.e. stereotypical and generalisations) from good practice.

The net effect is that employers who have undergone this process are, at least to a certain extent, in touch with their personal biases and pre-conceptions and make a deliberate effort not to let them impede their judgement. Therefore, it is entirely plausible that a typical public sector employer may simultaneously be willing to

admit to holding age stereotypical views but is firmly opposed to their operationalisation in, for example, the recruitment and selection process. In many ways this can be seen as distancing the 'private self' of unavoidable deep rooted attitudes from the 'organisational self' who is 'doing the right thing' (i.e. what is morally and ethically appropriate). Moreover, this kind of scenario would help resolve the apparent incongruity between the 'age stereotype' and the 'reason' results.

7.3.5 Age and Age Discrimination

As intimated earlier in the more general discussion of demographic factors (see section 7.3.1.), 'employer age' can be described as having only a moderate to low impact upon age stereotyping and even less bearing on the other measures of ageist attitudes. The presentation of age-based mean scores for age stereotypical attitudes (see table 7.10 below) shows that four of the five points of statistical difference exhibit significance at the lowest level probability (i.e. $p<.05$*) and the dispersal of mean scores generally displays a lack of consistency. It is also important to bear in mind the distribution of respondents when interpreting the results presented in table 7.10; most notably the lowest and highest of the six age groups, when combined, still only account for 3.6% (n=9) of the total number of respondents.

One area where there does appear to be a degree of coherence to the pattern of scoring is in relation to the points which are assessed as being significant. However, the profile of scoring in these instances would appear to have more to do with a psychological phenomena

often referred to as 'projection' - a perceptual process involving "attributing one's own characteristics to other people" (Robbins, 1989:90) - than 'stereotyping'.

Table 7.10 - A Comparison of Age Stereotypes According to Age Group

Stereotype (and sign-ificance)	Mean Score -30yrs	Mean Score 20-30yrs	Mean Score 30-40yrs	Mean Score 40-50yrs	Mean Score 50-60yrs	Mean Score +60yrs
ST1*	3.00	3.77	4.14	3.96	3.68	4.00
ST2**	3.80	3.01	2.84	2.40	2.63	2.00
ST3	2.40	2.56	2.48	2.58	2.50	2.50
ST4*	2.80	2.77	3.21	3.35	3.00	3.50
ST5	3.40	3.20	3.05	2.96	2.50	3.00
ST6	3.40	2.75	2.76	2.73	2.96	3.00
ST7	1.40	1.70	2.04	2.04	1.96	2.50
ST8	4.20	3.84	3.91	4.01	3.90	3.50
ST9	3.40	2.89	2.78	2.52	2.68	2.00
ST10	3.00	3.06	3.08	2.77	2.72	3.25
ST11	4.00	3.92	3.97	4.05	4.09	4.50
ST12	3.20	3.11	3.41	3.42	3.27	3.50
ST13	3.80	3.86	3.92	3.96	3.77	3.50
ST14*	3.80	3.45	3.25	3.10	2.81	2.75
ST15*	4.00	3.64	3.41	3.16	3.13	3.00
ST16	2.40	2.35	2.16	2.21	2.32	1.75
ST17	4.20	3.98	4.00	4.13	4.00	4.00

Notes: (1) * = significance level (*=p<.05, **=p< 01, ***=p<.001); (2) stereotype items 3,6,7 and 16 have been adjusted to accommodate reverse scoring system.

Projection and stereotyping are both forms of cognitive shortcut. However, 'projection' can be seen as being about 'sameness', because

views about oneself are used to generalise about others that we perceive as being in the same group (e.g. a younger employer about younger employees). By contrast, stereotyping is about 'differentness', it involves generalising about those that we choose to view as being in a different group from us (e.g. a younger employer about older employees).

The responses to items 2, 4, 9, 14, and 15 of the age stereotype pool of questions would appear to involve a high degree of 'projection'. For instance, the fact that employers in the '50 - 60yrs' and 'over 60yrs' age groups viewed older workers as 'more stable and loyal' (item 2) is clearly about perceptions of one's own group and is perhaps largely based upon an initial assessment of oneself as being stable and loyal and using this evaluation as a basis for positively judging one's peers (i.e. 'projection').

Similarly, younger employers' (i.e. under 30yrs old) tendency to strongly disagree with the assertion that 'younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers' (item 15) is most probably a function of 'projection'. The 'younger employer' is likely to perceive himself/herself to be reliable and uses this as basis for refuting the charge of 'unreliability' on behalf of all 'younger workers'. Although the occurrence of 'projection' is an interesting finding it does not in anyway enhance the overall significance of age as an explanatory variable in age discrimination.

With only one significant point of difference out of 14, the 'reasons for age preferences' results further denigrate the significance of age in explaining ageism. Furthermore, the responses to the open questions in Questionnaire A and Questionnaire B failed to highlight any significant differences of opinion according to respondent age.

The major conclusion that can be drawn from the above research findings is that age does not have a significant impact upon age discrimination. This runs contrary to the central proposition of the 'social comparison theory' of discrimination (Festinger, 1954) which was discussed earlier (see section 2.3.). Moreover, it challenges the following hypotheses which apply Festinger's conceptualisation of 'own group' and 'other group' to the construct of age:

H6 - The nature of the stereotypical image formed of younger and older workers is associated with the chronological age of the stereotyper.

H6a - Older employers have a more stereotypical view of, and negative attitude towards, younger workers than younger employers.

H6b - Younger employers have a more stereotypical view of, and negative attitude towards, older workers than older employers.

7.3.6 Occupation and Age Discrimination

The macro-analysis of demographic variables presented earlier (see section 7.3.1.) would seem to suggest that occupation is a highly significant factor in explaining attitudes towards age discrimination in employment. Indeed, the results summarised in tables 7.2 and 7.3 portray occupation and gender as the major statistically significant determinants of age-related attitudes. However, the deeper analysis of occupations provided here raises serious doubts about the pervasiveness of the explanatory status of this demographic factor.

Table 7.11 (see below) contains the means scores for the range age stereotypical items in relation to a four-part classification of occupations. Unlike gender - which displayed a directional consistency in terms of mean scores and significance - the pattern of occupationally determined attitudes is far more muddled.

The most graphic illustration of the disparateness of attitudes is the item-by-item ranking of stereotypes incorporated in table 7.11. The one facet of attitudes that does seem to have stability across items is the views expressed by 'professional and technical' respondents. The relatively low mean scores, and tendency to be ranked 1st for the majority of items and 2nd on the remainder of occasions, provide robust support for positing that this occupational group exhibit significantly more ageist attitudes than do the other occupational areas. Beyond this inference, it is difficult to meaningfully distinguish between the other three occupational groups. The randomness of the distribution of 2nd, 3rd and 4th place rankings

Table 7.11 - A Comparison of Age Stereotypes According to Occupational Group

Stereotype[1] (and sign-ificance)[2]	MEAN SCORES[4] Managerial & Supervisory (Rank)[3]	Professional & Technical (Rank)	Admin. & Clerical (Rank)	Personnel/ HRM (Rank)
STEREO1**	3.74 (2)	3.33 (1)	3.83 (3)	4.04 (4)
STEREO2**	2.71 (2)	2.48 (1)	3.50 (4)	2.75 (3)
STEREO3	2.48 (3)	2.34 (1)	2.38 (2)	2.61 (4)
STEREO4*	3.16 (=3)	2.38 (1)	3.12 (2)	3.16 (=3)
STEREO5	3.07 (3)	2.71 (1)	3.41 (4)	3.02 (2)
STEREO6	2.65 (2)	2.58 (1)	2.75 (3)	2.85 (4)
STEREO7**	2.05 (4)	1.34 (1)	1.59 (2)	2.03 (3)
STEREO8**	3.71 (3)	3.57 (1)	3.70 (2)	4.05 (4)
STEREO9	2.54 (2)	2.42 (1)	2.95 (4)	2.81 (3)
STEREO10	3.02 (=2)	2.38 (1)	3.12 (4)	3.02 (=2)
STEREO11	3.90 (2)	3.90 (2)	3.75 (1)	4.06 (4)
STEREO12	3.33 (3)	3.04 (2)	2.95 (1)	3.37 (4)
STEREO13	3.80 (3)	3.71 (2)	3.66 (1)	3.96 (4)
STEREO14	3.19 (2)	2.95 (1)	3.58 (4)	3.25 (3)
STEREO15*	3.45 (3)	3.00 (1)	3.91 (4)	3.38 (2)
STEREO16	2.31 (3)	1.96 (1)	2.55 (4)	2.20 (2)
STEREO17	4.11 (4)	3.90 (2)	3.83 (1)	4.05 (3)
AVERAGES =	3.13 (2)	2.82 (1)	3.21 (=3)	3.21 (=3)

Notes: (1) stereotype items 3,6,7 and 16 have been adjusted to accommodate reverse scoring system; (2) * = ANOVA significance level (*=$p<.05$, **=$p<.01$, ***=$p<.001$); (3) rank = the rank order for an item from 'most stereotypical' 1st to least 4th, and; (4) the job category called "other" accounted for only 1.2% of the total sample and was therefore disregarded in the above analysis.

and the closeness of the average scores (i.e. the 'mean of the means') bears testimony to their comparability. Therefore, the appropriate conclusion is that managers, supervisors, administrative and clerical

staff, and personnel/HRM practitioners do not have significantly differing attitudes towards age stereotypes.

The dispersal of means for the acceptability of reasons for age preferences (see table 7.12) exhibits the same general characteristics as those reported for age stereotypes. Respondents who classify themselves as 'professional and technical' find reasons for age preferences consistently more acceptable than other occupations; with 1st place ranking for 12 out of the 13 'reasons' items and 1st overall (i.e. their 'RTOTAL' score). The remaining groups were still firmly distanced from the 'professional/technical' group. However, the 'administrative and clerical' employers emerge as the second most discriminatory group. Not only were they 2nd at the aggregated level (i.e. the 'RTOTAL' mean score), they were also placed 2nd in 10 out of 13 instances. Managers and supervisors shared the 'least discriminatory' spot with personnel/HRM practitioners with both continuing to exhibit very similar mean scores.

No significant differences were reported for occupational groups in response to the open questions contained in section four of questionnaire A. The responses to the open questions in questionnaire B did produce one point of significant difference. However, it is important to bear in mind that questionnaire B was administered to a matched sample of personnel/HRM respondents (n=48) and managers (n=47). Furthermore, the point of difference was pertaining to attitudes towards the introduction of anti-ageist

legislation and as such had a very different point of emphasis to the 'age stereotypes' and 'reasons' results. In short, it would seem that personnel/HRM practitioners and managers agree about the nature, severity and general legitimacy of 'the problem' but disagree about 'the solution'. The differences of opinion between groups of respondents about the need for legislation will not be discussed any further here, instead, this issue will be considered in the later chapter on corrective measures (chapter 9).

Table 7.12 - A Comparison of the Acceptability of Reasons for Age Preferences According to Occupational Group

Reason (and sign-ificance)[1]	MEAN SCORES Managerial & Supervisory (Rank)[2]	Professional & Technical (Rank)	Admin. & Clerical (Rank)	Personnel/ HRM (Rank)
(1)PERSONA	2.38 (4)	2.04 (1)	2.16 (2)	2.32 (3)
(2)PERSONB***	2.71 (3)	2.19 (1)	2.41 (2)	2.82 (4)
(3)PERSONC1	2.42 (4)	1.95 (1)	2.00 (2)	2.32 (3)
(4)PERSONC2***	2.47 (4)	1.61 (1)	1.95 (2)	2.31 (3)
(5)STRUCTA*	2.35 (=3)	1.95 (1)	2.20 (2)	2.35 (=3)
(6)STRUCTB	2.64 (4)	2.61 (2)	2.58 (1)	2.62 (3)
(7)STRUCTC**	2.38 (2)	2.14 (1)	2.58 (4)	2.56 (3)
(8)STRUCTD*	2.76 (3)	2.47 (1)	2.70 (2)	2.84 (4)
(9)WORKA***	2.28 (3)	1.90 (1)	2.08 (2)	2.36 (4)
(10)WORKB**	1.71 (2)	1.66 (1)	1.95 (4)	1.94 (3)
(11)OTHERA	2.35 (=3)	2.00 (1)	2.29 (2)	2.35 (=3)
(12)OTHERB1***	2.59 (3)	2.19 (1)	2.25 (2)	2.68 (4)
(13)OTHERB2	2.59 (3)	2.28 (1)	2.54 (2)	2.63 (4)
(14)RTOTAL***	2.45 (3)	2.09 (1)	2.33 (2)	2.49 (4)

Notes: (1) * = ANOVA significance level (*=$p<.05$, **=$p<.01$, ***=$p<.001$); (2) rank = the rank order for an item from 'highest acceptance' 1st to least 4th.

The analysis of occupations presented in this section does not support the assertion made in hypothesis 10, that:

> **The occupational grouping to which an employer belongs is not associated with either the age stereotypical views they hold or their propensity to discriminate on the basis of age.**

Respondents who describe themselves as 'professional and/or technical' hold significantly more ageist attitudes than other occupational categories of respondents (i.e. managerial, supervisory, administrative, clerical, and personnel/HRM). A source of corroboration for this finding - although not sufficiently compatible enough to offer real triangulation - is provided by the earlier analysis of the prevalence of age limits in job advertisements (see table 7.1). 'Computing, science and technology' jobs, which more closely equate to the 'professional/technical' grouping than they do to either managerial/supervisory, administrative/clerical or personnel/HRM, were found to more frequently specify age limits than most of the other occupational groups.

The question this analysis raises is: Why are professional/technical employers more likely to discriminate on the basis of age? First, it is important to highlight that the unwavering persistence with which this grouping display ageist attitudes means that it operates to the detriment both of younger and older workers alike. One clue to the basis for these attitudes is perhaps provided by the lowest, and

therefore most ageist, response to the 'reasons' questions: professional and technical respondents reported "deterring applicants with lack of expertise or technical experience" (item ref 'PERSONC2') as the most acceptable reason for placing age restrictions in job advertisements. This view is significantly differentiates (i.e. $p<.001$) this occupational group from the others (see table 7.12).

Similarly, significant differences were found in terms of professional/technical respondents attitudes regarding the acceptability to specifying age limits in order to "deter applicants with outdated knowledge" (item 'PERSONC1') and to assist "succession planning - the need to maintain career progression opportunities within the firm" (item 'STRUCTA')

The nature of many professional and skilled white-collar technical jobs is that they are characterised by a prolonged period of initial formal 'pre', or immediately 'post' employment training (typically leading to an award by a professional body or a technical qualification), followed by a period in which essential on-the-job experience is gained and a continual process of updating one's knowledge-base. This general pattern conspires to legitimate discrimination against both older and younger workers. Younger workers are discriminated against because they lack the expertise and technical experience which comes with the praxis of working in the discipline and the gradual accumulation of knowledge.

Equally, the dynamic and ever changing nature of the professional and technical operations requires job incumbents to keep abreast of new developments and innovations. Older workers - who are stereotyped as change resistant, more difficult to train and lacking creativity - are seen as less equipped to meet these demands and are, therefore, also discriminated against. Only those in the middle age range are seen as having sufficient accumulated relevant experience blended with the dynamism need to keep pace with continual change. The net effect is that those outside of this secure age band are perceived as being legitimate targets of ageism by 'professional/technical' employers.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has provided insights into the nature of disadvantaged groups. It has demonstrated that discrimination against younger and older workers is context dependent. Given the contingent nature of ageism it has proved difficult to meaningfully distinguish between the relative disadvantage of these two age groups, however, by comparison to those in the 'middle age band', both are significantly disadvantaged and marginalised.

The analysis of age limits in job advertisements revealed a clear occupational pattern. Age restrictions were found to be more commonplace in 'creative, media and marketing' and 'computing, science and technology' jobs than for 'education' and 'social services, finance and personnel' jobs. The use of age limits tended to be associated with occupations/industries that could be described as

dynamic and change oriented and further analysis of the advertisement sample showed that those applying for vacancies in the private sector were more likely to be confronted by age limits.

If we turn to the nature of discrimination, a clear pattern of characteristics emerged. Although the age of an employer and size of organisation of employing organisation have no direct bearing upon ageist attitudes and behaviour, gender, occupational group and industrial sector were found to significantly affect ageism. From the analysis it is possible to generate a profile of the employer who is most likely to discriminate on the grounds of age as typically being: male, working in a 'professional/technical' discipline and located in the private sector.

Chapter 8 - Reasons for Ageism: Why is it Done?

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised into three main parts. In the first section an analysis of the 'reasons' data derived from section 2 of question A is undertaken. In particular, the relative significance of, and patterns of association between, the various reasons offered by employers are explored.

The second main section examines the qualitative data provided in response to the opening question contained in questionnaire B. In addition to a broad interpretative process of analysis, these short discursive accounts have been classified using the same general framework as applied to the qualitative data in order to permit meaningful comparisons to be made and to enable the results to be triangulated.

In the final main section the extent to which the reasons for age preferences have altered over time is assessed in two ways. First, a detailed comparison of the 1990 and 1995 cohorts is provided to establish whether there have been any significant attitudinal shifts. Second, the results of the current study are juxtaposed with earlier research which uses the same general classificatory system of reasons.

8.2. The Nature and Acceptability of Reasons for Age Preferences

As suggested earlier (see section 3.4) the 'reasons' considered here are based upon those identified by Slater (1973) in his questionnaire survey of employers who had specified age limits in job advertisements. In effect, the reasons offered by Slater's respondents can be seen as 'retrospective legitimations' of their behaviour. The basis of the responses given by employers in the present attitudinal survey (i.e. questionnaire A) is quite different for four main reasons. First, and most obviously, a different methodological approach is adopted. Second, instead of justifying their own behaviour respondents are responding more generally about their attitudes and thereby maintain greater emotional distance. Third, the sample is not entirely composed of discriminators. And finally, respondents are commenting on the acceptability of a range of reasons rather than being asked to present a single reason.

For the reasons outlined above, the data generated in the present study offers comprehensive insights into the nature and acceptability of reasons for age preferences. In this section the relative importance, distribution and general pattern of reasons is considered. The issue of 'relative importance' is examined in the following subsection using the mean scores for each item. Then, the frequency distribution of responses is used as a basis for determining the general popularity of the various reasons. And finally, the

existence of any common features and underlying patterns between items is assessed.

8.2.1. The Relative Importance of Specific Reasons

Using a similar approach to that undertaken in the analysis of age stereotypes (see section 6.2.1.), the mean scores for each item in the 'reasons' pool was calculated. The calculation was based upon the whole sample (n = 248) and a three point scoring system was used, namely; 1 pt = always acceptable; 2 pts = sometimes acceptable, and; 3 pts = never acceptable. Hence, the lower the score for each item, and across items, the more ageist the attitude displayed.

The mean scores for all 13 'reasons' are shown in table 8.1 (see overleaf). In accordance with the scoring system outlined above they are presented in ascending order from the highest ranked (i.e. the lowest mean score) indicating the 'most acceptable' reason for age preferences through to the lowest ranked (i.e. the highest mean score) and, therefore, the 'least acceptable' reason.

By some margin, circumstances where being of a particular age could be regarded as a 'genuine occupational qualification' (or 'GOQ') were deemed the most acceptable reason for age preferences. This finding is not entirely surprising given that the term 'GOQ' is borrowed from *The Sex Discrimination Act (1975)* and *The Race Relations Act (1976)* where it is used to cover legitimate exemptions (i.e. instances where employers may specify preferences for applicants of a particular race and/or gender). Inevitably, many employers, particularly those

Table 8.1 - Ranked Mean Scores of the Reasons Offered for Age Preferences

Mean Score	Rank Order	Ref. Code	Reason
1.88	1	WORKB	Job requirement - where being within a specific age range can be viewed as an 'genuine occupational qualification', e.g. a Youth Worker or a Fashion Model.
2.24	2	PERSONC2	Technical constraints - deters applicants who lack expertise or technical experience.
2.28	=3	PERSONC1	Technical constraints - deters applicants who have outdated knowledge
2.28	=3	WORKA	Job content factors - the work is too physically demanding or stressful to be carried out by certain age groups.
2.29	5	PERSONA	Individual constraints - the type of abilities, energy and strengths sought are more common amongst a certain age group.
2.30	6	STRUCTA	Succession planning - the need to maintain career progression opportunities within the firm.
2.32	7	OTHERA	Information - to provide general information about the possible age of the successful candidate, rather than to purposefully discourage older or younger applicants.
2.50	8	STRUCTC	Financial considerations - the likely return on investment and potential length of service is effected by age.
2.58	=9	OTHERB1	Filtering - used as a mechanism for restricting the total number of respondents who apply for the vacancy.
2.58	=9	OTHERB2	Filtering - used as a mechanism for shortlisting and/or sorting when a large number of application forms are returned.
2.62	11	STRUCTB	Age balance - postholder needs to be of a certain age to avoid upsetting the balance in ages of existing employees.
2.71	12	PERSONB	External constraints - family commitments, marital status and social stability.
2.79	13	STRUCTD	Company policy - the firm has a formal or informal policy in favour of specifying age limits in all job advertisements.

working in personnel/HRM, would have made a connection between 'race/sex GOQs' and the scope for 'age-based GOQs'. This raises an interesting question: In what kind of instances might age-based GOQ's apply? With gender, jobs such as a locker attendant in female changing rooms or a lavatory attendant in male toilets are clear examples of where being of a particular sex is a GOQ. Examples of racial GOQ's have included instances where being of a particular race is seen as an important requirement when working within the same ethnic community (i.e. due to language, customs, norms, access etc.).

One rule of thumb for GOQ's seems to be that they apply in instances where one is working with members of one's own group and where someone outside of that group would be deemed inappropriate (e.g. female attendant in a ladies lavatory or an Asian social worker working within the Asian community).

What about age? Are there occasions where it is essential to be young in order to work with younger people or old to work with older people? In principle, 'age-based GOQs' may be commendable and legitimate reasons for age preference. In practice, there are only a very limited number of instances where they might be appropriate.

The 2nd and 3rd ranked items in the scaling of relative importance both related to the notion of 'technical constraints'. However, the point of age preference differed immensely. Deterring applicants "who lack expertise or technical experience" (item PERSONC2)

seems to be implicitly targeted at younger workers, whilst deterring applicants "who have outdated knowledge" (item PERSONC1) is primarily aimed at older workers. Thus, in common with the findings uncovered by the factor analysis of age stereotypes, we have evidence of the existence of significant, and more importantly concurrent, anti-older worker and anti-younger worker sentiments.

Finally, the least acceptable reason (i.e. company policy) is almost the antithesis of the most acceptable reason (i.e. a 'GOQ'). The underlying legitimisation for a GOQ is that it is a narrowly focused form of discrimination insofar as it implies that in a particular instance where there is sufficient justification age preferences are permissible. By contrast, a company policy of specifying age limits is arbitrary and the net result, somewhat paradoxically, is a form of 'indiscriminate discrimination'. The fundamental contrariety between the two extremes of ranking would appear to have wider implications when the other 11 remaining reasons are considered. This facet of the results will be explored in a subsequent section on 'patterns of reasons' (see section 8.2.3.).

8.2.2. The Distribution of Reasons

The analysis of means tells us something about the 'average view', but it does not provide insights into the dispersal of views expressed. Therefore, percentage frequency distributions were calculated for each item (see table 8.2 below). As one might expect the general popularity of particular responses mirrors the general order of means scores. For instance, the 'GOQ reason', which was ranked 1st, was

Table 8.2 - Distribution of Responses to Statements about the Acceptability of Reasons Offered for Age Preferences

Reasons	always acceptable	sometimes acceptable	never acceptable
Personal Reasons			
a) Individual constraints - the type of abilities, energy and strengths sought are more common amongst a certain age group.	1.2%	66.1%	31.9%
b) External constraints - family commitments, marital status and social stability.	2.4%	23.0%	74.2%
c) Technical constraints - deters applicants who have: (i) outdated knowledge;	5.6%	42.7%	45.6%
(ii) lack of expertise or technical experience.	8.5%	54.0%	35.9%
Structural Reasons			
a) Succession planning - the need to maintain career progression opportunities within the firm.	3.6%	60.1%	35.5%
b) Age balance - postholder needs to be of a certain age to avoid upsetting the balance in ages of existing employees.	2.0%	33.9%	64.1%
c) Financial considerations - the likely return on investment and potential length of service is effected by age.	2.8%	44.4%	52.8%
d) Company policy - the firm has a formal or informal policy in favour of specifying age limits in all job advertisements.	3.2%	14.5%	82.3%
Work Reasons			
a) Job content factors - the work is too physically demanding or stressful to be carried by certain age groups.	5.2%	61.7%	33.1%
b) Job requirement - where being within a specific age range can be viewed as an 'genuine occupational qualification', e.g. a Youth Worker or a Fashion Model.	23.0%	65.3%	11.3%
Other Reasons			
a) Information - to provide general information about the possible age of the successful candidate, rather than to purposefully discourage older or younger applicants.	5.6%	49.6%	42.3%
b) Filtering - used as a mechanism for: (i) restricting the total number of respondents who apply for the vacancy;	3.2%	33.9%	62.5%
(ii) shortlisting and/or sorting when a large number of application forms are returned.	4.4%	30.6%	64.1%

reported as 'always/sometimes' acceptable by 88% of the total sample. Equally, the 'company policy reason', which ranked last, was only considered acceptable (i.e. 'always' and 'sometimes') in 18% of instances.

Arguably, the most engaging aspect of table 8.2 is the general level of acceptability expressed for the range of items. Those who found a given reason acceptable (e.g. 'always' or 'sometimes') were in the majority for 7 out of the 13 items and at least a third of all respondents felt that the reason offered was acceptable in 11 out of the 13 cases. Moreover, the aggregation of all the responses across all of the items revealed that the 'acceptables' were in the majority (i.e. 51.1% for 'sometimes/always acceptable' v. 48.9% for 'never acceptable'). The major implication of this finding is that there continues to be a substantial body of support for the exercise of age preferences in employment decision-making albeit that in many instances this view is qualified by the proviso of 'sometimes'.

8.2.3 Patterns and Clusters of Reasons

It may be helpful to use Slater's (1973) four-part classification of reasons as a starting point for analysis given that it provided the basis for developing the questionnaire items and substantially contributed to the formation of three of the four 'reasons-based' hypotheses (e.g. hypothesis 11, 12, and 13). The reference codes in table 8.1, and the underlined subheadings in table 8.2, directly equate to Slater's four categories, namely: personal reasons, structural reasons, work reasons and other reasons. (Full

descriptions of Slater's categories, along with a general critique of his work, can be found in section 2.5 of Chapter 2).

An inspection of the ranking of reasons in table 8.1 highlights the existence of moderate, rather than strong, evidence of a category-based pattern. The most prominent aspect of the pattern is that work reasons and personal reasons feature in the higher ranking positions while structural reasons and other reasons are generally congregated in the bottom half of the ranking. With the two 'work reasons' occupying 1st and joint 3rd place in the rankings, it would seem that this category can be regarded as encompassing the most acceptable set of reasons for age preferences. Similarly, but not as emphatically, 'personal reasons' - which ranked 2nd, equal 3rd, 5th and 13th - can be described as collectively being of above average acceptability. 'Structural reasons' and 'other reasons' jointly share all but one of the places in the rankings from 6th down to last position, and therefore, these two groupings were viewed as having the lowest level of acceptance.

The relative significance of the groupings identified in this analysis of reasons is not consistent with, and does not therefore support, the weightings which are posited in the three main research hypotheses, namely:

> **Hypothesis 11 - The perceptions held regarding the abilities, characteristics and personal constraints of older and younger workers is the *most significant* reason why employers**

discriminate against employees (and prospective employees) on the grounds of age.

Hypothesis 12 - Organisational needs and structural factors are *highly significant* reasons why employers discriminate against employees (and prospective employees) on the grounds of age.

Hypothesis 13 - The demands of a job and the nature of the work environment are *relatively insignificant* reasons why employers discriminate against employees (and prospective employees) on the grounds of age.

Hypothesis 13 suggests that 'work reasons' are *relatively significant* where in fact they have been found to be the *most significant* grouping insofar as the greatest proportion of employers consider them to be legitimate grounds for discriminating on the basis of age. In effect, the research findings and this hypothesis are antipodal. 'Personal reasons', according to the assertion made in hypothesis 11, should be the *most significant* grouping of reasons. However, although *significant* they were found to be less so than 'work reasons'. Finally, the claim that 'structural reasons' are *highly significant* (hypothesis 12) was also seriously brought into question on the basis that the research findings outlined above indicate that they are the *least significant* grouping.

At this juncture it seems appropriate to raise some doubts about the homogeneity and independence of the groupings of reasons discussed above and present an alternative interpretative scheme for classifying the 13 reasons contained in questionnaire A.

The basis for challenging Slater's categories is the way in which the groupings are mutually implicated. More specifically, on closer inspection 'work reasons' and 'personal reasons' tend to collapse into each other. For example, both the reasons pertaining to 'technical constraints' (i.e. PERSONC1 and PERSONC2) are labelled as 'personal reasons', but an equally strong case could be made for considering them to be 'work reasons' because they directly relate to the assessment of a specific job (or group of jobs) as much as they do to the personal characteristic of applicants. Equally, 'work reason A' and 'personal reason A' seem to be complimentary dimensions of the same assessment rather than two genuinely different reasons.

The same collapsing effect can be observed between 'structural reasons' and 'other reasons'. All three of the 'other reasons' for employing age restrictions - i.e. for information to restrict the volume of job applicants and as a mechanism for shortlisting/sorting candidates - could be described as merely being a subset of STRUCTD (i.e. part of a formal or informal company policy).

The central point of this exposition is that the 13 reasons for age preferences can be more meaningfully analysed if they are thought of as being encapsulated within two main groupings rather than four.

The first group which combines 'work' and 'personal' reasons relies upon a form of "job-specific" age preference/discrimination. The second group which merges 'structural' and 'other' reasons is built upon a "organisationally-generic" variety of age preference/discrimination.

The term 'job-specific' has been chosen because the reasons in this category all take the job as a focal point for enacting age preferences. With this form of age discrimination a matching process between the perceived requirements of the job and the attributes believed to be more (or less) prevalent among a particular age group(s) takes place. This can illustrated by a simple hypothetical example. If seeking to appoint a 'hod carrier' an employer might: (1) make an assessment about the intrinsic requirements of the job - i.e. it involves physically demanding work; (2) consider the job in relation to the attributes of particular age groups - i.e. older workers are less physically able, and; (3) actively pursue appointing a younger person - i.e. discriminate against older applicants on the basis of their age.

All six of the 'work reasons' and 'personal reasons' (with the exception of PERSONB which will be discussed shortly) are "job-specific" insofar as they are narrowly focused and their application varies from job-to-job according to the desire to achieve congruence between the demands of the job and inferences about age-based attributes (whether legitimate or stereotypical). Viewed in this way, we might reasonably expect an employer to see some jobs as suited to

younger workers, others as suited to older workers and some where age preferences have no real bearing.

By their very nature 'organisationally-generic' reasons are in many ways diametrically opposed to 'job-specific' reasons. Instead of using the demands of the job as a basis for filling a vacancy, an assessment of the wider organisational implications provides the reference point for age discrimination. Not only are 'organisationally-generic' reasons broader in scope, they are also more static and arbitrarily applied.

If we re-examine the ranking of reasons for age preferences (see table 8.1) using the 'job-specific v. organisationally-generic' classification a significant pattern is revealed. All five of the top rankings are 'job-specific'. The 1st ranked item (WORKB), clearly requires a consideration of the particular job in order to identify an essential feature which legitimates the use of an age-related GOQ. Equally, for the 2nd and 3rd ranked items, the process of deterring candidates who 'lack expertise or technical experience' (PERSONC1) and/or who 'have outdated knowledge' (PERSONC1) relies upon an initial assessment of the job (e.g. 'lacking expertise' only becomes relevant is having particular expertise is a job requirement). 'Job content factors' (WORKA), the 4th ranked item, is unequivocally job-specific. And finally, the 5th ranked item refers to 'the type of abilities, energy and strengths sought.....'. But, sought in relation to what? The answer has to be: in relation to a specific job.

All but one of the remaining 8 reasons (i.e. the 8 bottom ranked items) are 'organisationally-generic'. 'Succession planning' (STRUCTA) is clearly not job-specific in nature, instead assessments across a range of occupational groups, sections, and departments are made to consider the wider medium to long-term organisational implications of recruiting from particular age groups. Equally, 'age balance' (STRUCTB) is about ensuring a 'fit' across the existing age profile of employees. The 'financial considerations' (STRUCTC) of return on investment and potential length of service are based upon maximising value for money rather than specific job-related factors. Finally, 'company policy' (STRUCTD), 'providing information' (OTHERA), 'shortlisting/sorting' applications' (OTHERB2) and 'restricting the volume of applicants' (OTHERB1), are all blanket reasons which are applied to a broad range of appointments and are not, therefore, job contingent.

Returning to the question of the exception referred to earlier, it would appear that PERSONB is neither a 'job-specific' or 'organisationally-generic' reason. 'External constraints' (i.e. family commitments, marital status and social stability) can be more accurately described as being part of one's private life than located within the work domain. Consequently, this reason is distinct. Furthermore, it probably rates as such an unacceptable justification for age preferences (i.e. ranked 12th) because it is seen as intruding into an arena where it is generally considered taboo for an organisation to pry too far and make judgements.

Overall, the evident 'top half/bottom half' separation of the two groupings of reasons points to a single unambiguous conclusion: 'job-specific' forms of age discrimination are significantly more acceptable than 'organisationally-generic' forms of age discrimination.

8.3 Discursive Insights into Reasons for Age Preferences

The short written accounts examined in this section are those provided in response to the opening question in questionnaire B: "Do you think that age discrimination in employment is justifiable? And why?" Although not specifically geared to eliciting responses which pertain to 'reasons for age discrimination', the use of the word 'justifiable' ensured that many respondents sought to elucidate on legitimations/reasons for ageism.

Out of the total sample (n = 97), the answers provided by 63 respondents (i.e. 65%) could be construed as equating to 'reasons'. Of which 84% (n = 53) could be described as 'job-specific' and 16% (n = 10) were 'organisationally-generic'.

For the reasons explained earlier, it proved almost impossible to meaningfully distinguish between many of the work and personal reasons offered. It is, nevertheless, worth mentioning that none of the responses were synonymous with the 'external constraints' subcategory of 'personal reasons'. In other words, no one identified either family commitments, martial status, or social stability as justifications for age preferences. Arguably, this finding is

consistent with the low level of acceptability (i.e. ranked 12th out of 13) reported for this factor by respondents completing the attitudinal scale of reasons contained in questionnaire A (see table 8.1.)

The responses covered the range of 'job-specific' issues (i.e. job requirements, technical and individaul constraints, and job content factors), which were found to be the most acceptable in the attitudinal survey of reasons. Typical illustrations of responses in this category were:

> Physical demands of job is a reason to consider [B1].
>
> Age discrimination is only justifiable when there are genuine reasons for applying age limits - for example when a person is unlikely to have the necessary experience for a job below a certain age. Even so, should think very carefully before setting age limits [B3].
>
> Some jobs do not suit certain age groups, eg heavy work (physical) for older people [B4].
>
> There may be some occupations which require particular physical strength or like GOQ may be a job where building relationships with peers is essential [B5].
>
> You sometimes want people to be able to do certain jobs that require a young person or an older and mature person, someone who would stay and not go too quickly [B7].
>
> Depends on the type of job e.g. where innovation etc is an essential criterion for the job [B12].
>
> Occasionally the physical aspect determines the age. Sometimes a skill is gained by experience and in some roles the skill is essential to the task e.g. professional jobs [B22].
>
> Because there may be certain jobs that could not be done by a young or old person [B23].
>
> There are some jobs that require a more senior person [28].
>
> Some jobs may require the age barriers in relation to a particular job e.g. graduate opportunities, manager between certain age as feel more mature and more able [B42].

Impairment of faculties e.g. judgements over sight and hearing, reactions for drivers. Necessary to relate to certain age groups e.g. bouncers/stewards at pop concerts. Degree of fitness needed for some jobs, etc [B54].

Some professions (e.g. air hostess) require a certain youthful attractiveness and appearance. Also some jobs require physical/mental alertness (e.g. pilot) which the ageing process undermines [B57].

Because some jobs require people of certain age groups [B58].

Some people are too old for certain jobs while some are too young [B59].

People of particular age groups may be incapable of doing certain jobs i.e. physical work or need for experience [B63].

Certain jobs require long hours at a fast rate, with much travel and little sleep - characteristics which I believe would better suit a young man 20-45 [B74].

Depends on the context of the job [B77].

Depending on the type of job - experience needed, physical condition, maturity [B82].

Sometimes it is necessary for an applicant to be of a certain age depending on the job requirements and length of job and type of job [B85].

Certain ages are required for some specific jobs [B92].

Among the 'organisationally-generic' reasons, 'financial considerations' dominated. In particular, the return on investment in relation to training costs were cited in six of the ten instances:

Can the person perform the work. If so employ. If high levels of training are required the useful working life needs to be considered [B10].

If the company are going to invest in training they will of course want to recover some of their investment [B11].

Where a post requires training I feel age discrimination can be justified as training is expensive and is better spent on younger people [B36].

Could involve organisation in excessive cost - pension, training, etc [B40].

Will depend on type of duties covered and whether re-training that person would add any value to person/employer [B75].

Maybe because of the length of training that may have to be given [B86].

Of the remaining four 'organisationally-generic' responses, two seemed to be concerned with 'succession planning':

> One shouldn't assign a stereotype to an individual. If someone however is approaching retirement age and the post involves a minimum of more than 1 yrs work then it may be justifiable [B32].
>
> If you intend the person to remain as a long term prospect [B93].

And, the final two reasons related to 'age balance/cultural fit':

> If the person is older or younger than the average in the company it's not their work ability I would be concerned about but their general attitude [B26].
>
> It depends on the nature of the organisation, its culture and the kind of people working there and the image it promotes and what its aims are [B29].

The qualitative results presented here strongly reinforce the findings of the quantitative analysis of attitudes towards the acceptability of the various reasons offered in support of age preferences. The attitudinal data demonstrated that 'job-specific' reasons for age preferences were consistently, and significantly, felt to be more acceptable than 'organisationally-generic' ones. Equally, the examination of short written accounts has shown that of the 63 responses which sought to provide rationales for age discrimination, 84% were found to be 'job-specific' compared to only 16% which had obvious 'organisationally-generic' connotations.

The triangulation between the two approaches is particular significant for two reasons. First, the points of similarity have arisen

irrespective of the contrasting nature of the methodologies adopted (i.e. 'scaled range restriction' for the attitudinal items and 'free choice' for the open question). Second, the corroborating data has been gathered from two completely independent sources (i.e. respondents who completed questionnaire A and a different set of respondents who completed questionnaire B).

A further aspect of the discursive material which warrants attention are the views of respondents who generally described age discrimination as unacceptable. In effect, the earlier attitudinally-scaled results only measured 'degrees of acceptability'. In instances where a respondent chose 'never' as an answer, in response to the acceptability of a particular reason, we were unable to draw reliable inferences about their underlying motives.

The less restricted style of questioning permitted by the open question on the justification for ageism gave respondents who felt that the use of age preferences was unwarranted and unacceptable the opportunity to articulate their views. In all, 16 respondents challenged the justifiability of age discrimination. Although to a certain extent several of the responses in this category had 'moral/ethical' undertones, a substantial proportion of views expressed centred on a kind of 'economic discourse' insofar as they either indicated or implied that there were more reliable criteria available on which to base employment-related decisions than age. The unacceptable reasons presented were:

Few jobs really require a person to be a certain age. It seems fairer to set measurable requirements for a job other than age [B16].

If someone is suitable for a job, then age is not important if a person can do the job [B24].

Because age is not an indication of suitability for any job [B37].

Only justifiable if backed up by medical testing of strength and agility [B41].

Aptitudes and qualities can be tested - age alone does not provide an indication [B43].

Appointment to any job should be based solely on the ability to do it [B51].

People should be judged on results/performance alone [B60].

Unfair [B67].

Employment should be on merit and experience and not on how old you are [B70].

Age should not be a 'barrier' - other criteria could be used to find suitable applicants for a job and should form part of equal opportunities policies [B71].

Maturity of individual far more important than the actual age [B72].

It creates artificial barriers to employing the right person for the job. It discriminates against experience [B73].

Persons should be judged on performance alone, age may be a factor in judging effectiveness but should not be a discriminating factor [B76].

So long as somebody is capable of doing a job well, age should be immaterial [B78].

We can only be employed on the basis of ability to do the job, that is only factor [B87].

Because it can often be an employers prejudice in that someone is too old to do a certain job or too young because no experienced enough [B96].

It should be stressed that 'moral/ethical' and the 'economic' positions are not mutually exclusive, indeed for many of the above responses it seemed difficult to disentangle the two. However, they do nevertheless represent very different conceptualisation of ageism.

A 'moral/ethical' discourse frames ageism as 'bad' because it is unfair and inequitable and is, therefore, mainly concerned with the detrimentally impact upon the individual of being treated in an inappropriate manner. By contrast, the 'economic' discourse presents ageism as 'bad' because there are more reliable ways of making employment-related decisions and is, therefore, primarily concerned with the detrimental impact upon the organisation of making the wrong decision.

The 'economic' stance represents a far weaker form of opposition to ageism. It relegates ageism to the status of an irrelevance (i.e. not worth doing), whereas the 'moral/ethic' position is the manifestation of a deeper value-based commitment which encourages a more resolute and proactive role in challenging ageism.

8.4 The Changing Nature of the Reasons Offered

In the following subsection the 1990 and 1995 cohorts of respondents (n=248) that completed questionnaire A are compared. This process of direct comparison is undertaken for two reasons. First, in order to establish whether there have been shifts in the level of acceptability of particular reasons offered by employers in support of the expression of age preference. And second, to consider the existence of an overarching trend (i.e. whether the 'reasons' are generally becoming more or less acceptable).

The other subsection, which explores the changing nature of reasons, compares the quantitative and qualitative results of the present

with the findings of two previous studies. Namely, those undertaken by Slater (1973) and Collins (1975).

8.4.1. Evidence of Shifting Attitudes

The extent to which attitudes towards reasons for age preferences have altered was briefly discussed earlier in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.2.). At that stage it was suggested that the general conclusion to be derived from the 'reasons' data was that the 1995 respondents tended to find the reasons offered in support of age preferences less acceptable than their 1990 counterparts.

As table 8.3 (see below) shows, the differences between the two samples are substantial. In all, 10 of the 13 reasons were found to have statistically significant differences in their mean scores; and the direction of the difference was consistent across all 13 reasons (i.e. higher means and, therefore, less acceptance for the 1995 respondents). Moreover, half of the statistically significant reasons were reported at the highest level of probability (i.e. $p<.001$). The highly significant nature of these findings resembles those observed for gender: the support for the existence of meaningful differences between the two samples is overwhelming.

The percentage differences presented in table 8.3 also offer scope for analysing the relative degree of change across the respective items. As can be seen, no especially critical points of percentile deviation stand out; and, with perhaps the exception of items 6 and 11, the pattern of movement is relatively uniform.

Table 8.3 - A Comparison of the Acceptability of Reasons for Age Preferences for the 1990 and 1995 Cohorts

Reason	Mean Score 1990[a]	Mean Score 1995[b]	Direction and ANOVA Significance	% Diff. Between a & b
(1)PERSONA	2.18	2.35	a>b*	+7.8%
(2)PERSONB	2.47	2.83	a>b***	+14.6%
(3)PERSONC1	2.07	2.39	a>b**	+15.5%
(4)PERSONC2	2.01	2.36	a>b***	+17.4%
(5)STRUCTA	2.19	2.36	a>b*	+7.8%
(6)STRUCTB	2.58	2.64	a>b	+2.3%
(7)STRUCTC	2.33	2.59	a>b***	+11.2%
(8)STRUCTD	2.67	2.85	a>b**	+6.7%
(9)WORKA	2.07	2.39	a>b***	+15.5%
(10)WORKB	1.71	1.96	a>b***	+14.6%
(11)OTHERA	2.29	2.33	a>b	+1.8%
(12)OTHERB1	2.42	2.67	a>b**	+10.3%
(13)OTHERB2	2.49	2.63	a>b	+5.6%
(14)RTOTAL	2.28	2.51	a>b***	+10.1%

Note: *=$p<.05$ **=$p<.01$ ***=$p<.001$

The results points to the same conclusion: there has been a significant shift in attitudes away from the acceptability of the expression of age preferences in employment-related decision making. As is apparent from the data, the reasons offered in support of ageist behaviour have become less acceptable over time. In terms of a pattern of change, it would seem that rather than seeing major swings on a restricted range of items, we are witnessing a more gradual movement across the whole spectrum of 'reasons'. When considered in conjunction with some of the other earlier findings on age stereotyping and the use of age limits in job advertisements, this

may be indicative of a wider shift in attitudes about age discrimination.

As illustrated above, the findings of this analysis do not support hypothesis 14, which posits that:

> **The reasons offered in support of age preferences are relatively stable and do not substantially alter over time.**

8.4.2 Comparisons with Past Work

This section compares and contrasts the results of the present with the findings of research undertaken by Slater (1973) and Collins (1975). The basis for comparison is that both these studies used the same general framework for classifying the reasons offered by employers.

It should, however, be pointed out that both Slater and Collins used very different methodological approaches to the one utilised within this thesis. Slater's (1973) work was based upon a postal questionnaire sent to employers (n=500) who had specified an age limit in a job advertisement appearing in the *Daily Telegraph* over a fixed period of one month. Collins (1975) closely replicated Slater's study. He used the same basic methodology of a follow-up questionnaire sent to employers who had earlier placed advertisements which contained age limits. He even used the same data source as Slater (i.e. the *Daily Telegraph*) and the same duration of analysis (i.e. one month of advertisements); the only

significant difference was that he also examined *The Times* newspaper during the same period.

Compared to the present study, the constitution of the samples were also somewhat different. The respondents in Slater's and Collins' studies are, in effect, all 'discriminators'. Therefore, the 'reasons' they expressed inextricably linked to their own personal legitimations for their behaviour. In contrast, the present study is made up of two broad, more representative samples of employers. First, there are those who have completed the attitudinal section of questionnaire A on the acceptability of reasons for age discrimination. Second, there are those respondents who have provided answers to an open question on the justification for age discrimination contained in questionnaire B.

Given the areas of disparity between the past and the present research it would be unwise to seek to generate detailed insights or attempt to derive definitive inferences about employers' reasons for age preferences. Instead, the aim of this comparison is to establish whether, broadly speaking, there are any discernible points of general similarity between the studies.

The attitudinal research offers insights into the acceptability of reasons for age preferences. However, unlike the previous studies it does not provide insights into the 'prevalence' of the various reasons. It is important to distinguish between the 'acceptability' and 'prevalence' of 'reasons'. For instance, age-based GOQ's have been

shown to be the most 'acceptable' reason for expressing age preferences. However, given that this is seen as only applying in exceptional circumstances, they are unlikely to be the most 'prevalent' of the 'reasons' used.

Because the answers to the open question do offer insights into 'prevalence' it is possible to juxtapose the relative proportion of respondents supporting particular reasons for age preferences with those found in the previous studies. The results of this comparison are summarised in table 8.4.

Table 8.4 - A Comparison of Past Research into Employers' Reasons for Age Preferences and the Findings of the Discursive Analysis

Slater (1973)	Collins (1975)	Discursive Results
Job-Specific Reasons 55% (i.e. 'personal' 49% and 'work' reasons 6%).	Job-Specific Reasons 68% (i.e. 'personal' 47% and 'work' reasons 21%).	Job-Specific Reasons 84% ('personal' and 'work' not distinguished in this study).
Org-Generic Reasons 45% (i.e. 'structural' 42% and 'other' reasons 3%).	Org-Generic Reasons 32% (i.e. 'structural' 31% and 'other' reasons 1%).	Org-Generic Reasons 16% (i.e. 'structural' 16% and 'other' reasons 0%).

One of the most obvious aspects of table 8.4. is the consistency with which 'job-specific' reasons are more frequently cited as reasons than 'organisationally-generic' ones. Furthermore, 'other reasons' as a subcategory of 'organisationally-generic' grouping are consistently the least popular reasons. These findings correlate with the attitudinal results: 'job-specific' reasons which were collectively seen as the most 'acceptable' (i.e. ranked 1st to 5th) are also the most

common; 'organisationally-generic' reasons were seen as 'least acceptable' (i.e. bottom half of the rankings) and are least common.

The major point of dissimilarity between the past work and the current study is the general popularity of structural reasons (i.e. 42% in 1973, 31% in 1995, and 16% in 1995). It would seem that the prevalence of this subgrouping of 'organisationally-generic' reasons has declined over the past two decades. However, the disparate nature of the studies compared means that this inference must be regarded as somewhat inconclusive.

Overall, although not offering strong corroboration - given the methodological issues discussed earlier - the past work does nevertheless provide some indirect support for the general pattern of reasons uncovered by the attitudinal and discursive research contained in this thesis.

8.5 Summary

This chapter has provided a series of insights into the reasons offered for condoning ageist behaviour in the workplace. In particular, it has demonstrated that there is an underlying pattern to the support for the reasons offered, however, it is different to the one posited via hypotheses 11, 12 and 13.

The triangulation observed between the attitudinal survey data and the discursive accounts confirms the existence of a pattern formed around the separation of a set of focused job-related reasons (i.e. 'job-

specific') for age discrimination and a broader set of organisation-wide factors (i.e. organisationally-generic). The attitudinal research identified that employers perceive 'job-specific' reasons as collectively offering 'more acceptable' legitimations for age preferences than 'organisationally-generic' ones. Equally, the discursive results, produced by a different sample of respondents, show that 'job-specific' reasons are more typically cited by employers as a justification for age discrimination. Further tentative support for the above findings is provided by the previous studies on 'reasons' (namely: Slater, 1973; Collins, 1975) which also suggests that the 'job-specific' grouping encapsulates the most commonplace reasons for ageism.

Finally, hypothesis 14 was not found to be supported by the research into the temporal dynamics of reasons. The ANOVA comparison of the 1990 and 1995 respondents, who completed the 'reasons' section of the attitudinal questionnaire, highlighted that a significant change in attitudes had occurred. Rather than major movement on selective items, the analysis revealed that there has been a more gradual, consistent and wholesale shift encompassing the full range of reasons offered. In short, the implication is that exhibiting age preferences, for whatever reason, is becoming increasingly less acceptable.

Chapter 9 - Anti-Ageist Measures: What to do About it?

9.1 Introduction

Apart from the IPD (Institute of Personnel and Development) code of practice on age discrimination and several examples of the company-based policies (see for example: Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1997; Elliot, 1991; Kirkby, 1990; Smith, 1990; Summers, 1990), there is very limited evidence of ageism being addressed. In the absence of such initiatives, including age legislation, the consideration of anti-ageist measures becomes a largely projective endeavour. Therefore, rather than a retrospective examination of effectiveness, it is primarily 'attitudes' towards various voluntary and compulsory measures which are considered here.

There are three main parts to this chapter. In the following section the general level of support for anti-ageist measures is assessed. Then, in the subsequent main section, employers' views of the potential scope for, and relative importance of , particular measures are presented and discussed. In the final main section the specific areas of employment requiring remedial action are considered.

9.2 The General Support for Corrective Measures

Probably the most obvious measure of support for anti-ageist initiatives are the responses to direct questioning about the need for age-based legislation. This question was asked in both questionnaires A and B, albeit that it was posed slightly differently

in each instance. One question referred specifically to legislation to tackle the use of age limits in recruitment and the other was more broadly framed as pertaining to ageism in employment. A summary of respondents views regarding the need for legislation are given in table 9.1.

Table 9.1 - A Summary of Employers' Views of the Need for Anti-Ageist Legislation

Source/Question	'Yes' % (*n*)	'No' % (*n*)	'Unsure' % (*n*)	'No Reply' % (*n*)	Sample Size
Questionnaire A - In the USA it is illegal to specify age limits in job advertisements. Should similar legislation be introduced in this country?	51.2% (*n*=127)	33.9% (*n*=84)	11.7% (*n*=29)	3.2% (*n*=8)	*n*=248
Questionnaire B - In the UK racism and sexism are unlawful, should similar legislation be introduced to address ageism?	75.3% (*n*=73)	24.7% (*n*=24)	0.0% (*n*=0)	0.0% (*n*=0)	*n*=97
Aggregated - Q2 (questionnaire A) and Q3 (questionnaire B).	58.0% (*n*=200)	31.3% (*n*=108)	8.4% (*n*=29)	2.3% (*n*=8)	*n*=345

From table 9.1 it is evident that the majority of employers favour the introduction of anti-ageist legislation. However, it is important to remember that a commitment to legislation is only one dimension of possible support for action. There are likely to be respondents who said 'no' to legislation, but, nevertheless, support other measures such as re-education and company policies. In order to identify this latter grouping of employers the text accompanying the 'no' and 'unsure' (*n*=137) responses was re-analysed to establish whether support for alternative measures existed.

The 'no' and 'unsure' responses to legislation can be sub-divided into four main categories:

1. 'No discernible position' - instances where no rationale accompanies the stated position (e.g. 'no', 'maybe', 'unsure', etc.) or where the answer is tangential to the question asked.

2. 'Legislation inappropriate' - occasions where legislation is described as likely to be either ineffectual and/or intrusive, but without a clear 'pro' or 'anti' measures view being expressed.

3. 'Non- interventionist' - responses which either state or imply that age discrimination is not a problem and does not, therefore, require any form of remedial action/solution.

4. 'Pro-other measures' - where alternative corrective measures (such as re-education, company policies, etc.) are advocated.

Of the 137 "no" and "not sure" responses to the introduction of anti-ageist legislation, 33.6% (n=46) could be described as adopting 'no discernible position'. Failure to elaborate beyond a simple 'no' or 'unsure' accounted for the greater majority of answers. In several instances there were answers, but they did not reveal either a positive or negative attitude to legislation and/or other corrective action. For example, one respondent commented: "Yes and no, it is difficult to answer the question without more information." There were also several obscure and unintelligible responses such as: "Age

limits should only be used if there is a legal reason." Is this person talking about statutory retirement age? Does (s)he mistakenly think that age legislation already exists? Either way, for the response given it is not possible to glean a discernible attitude towards anti-ageist legislation.

A variation on the 'no discernible position' category is the 'legislation inappropriate' grouping. Here responses espouse an anti-legislative stance, but give no indication as to whether or not the respondent is generally 'anti' or 'pro' alternative measures. This group contained 21.9% (n=30) of the total 'no/not sure' responses.

Two main subcategories of rationale for regarding legislation as inappropriate emerged. First, the majority of the respondents (63.3%) queried the extent to which legislation would actually deter age discrimination. Typical comments included:

> No - if age guidelines were not shown in the advert then they would be practised at the interview or from application forms [A53].
>
> I don't think it would make much difference, the discrimination would just take place at a later stage [A60].
>
> No - I think employers would still "weed out" the prospective employees if they were looking for a specific age group. Making it illegal would not necessarily prevent it happening [A75].
>
> Questionable - discrimination will still occur later at the interview stage if the employer has strong prejudices, as in racial discrimination when candidates ethnic origin is not asked [A85].
>
> No - legislation does nothing to change attitudes it merely obscures the intention [A87].
>
> Legislation will make little difference. In practice, if an employer is looking to appoint a particular age group they will only shortlist on that criteria [A124].

No - attitudes are seldom changed by legislation. Would simply waste applicants' time applying for jobs which are discriminated at a later stage [A126].

Legislation would not necessarily improve the situation as it is the company culture that is more important than statute in the recruitment of individuals [A136].

No - even if there was legislation people would still discriminate. A lot of applicants would apply for jobs with no chance of success [A149].

No - it would have little effect and impossible to police [A160].

No - because it would deal with symptoms not the problem [A165].

No - like all other legislation regarding employing individuals, it is not effective. Simply by not stating an age range the person shortlisting will impose his/her own ideas regardless [A176]

No - legislation in itself would not prevent discrimination [A183].

No - not sure legislation would help. If employer wants to discriminate by age could do so after the initial application anyway [A221].

No - I am against over legislating in such matters, it does not change attitudes and beliefs [A222].

No - legally 'banning' age from adverts would not stop age discrimination [A234].

No - It is too intangible. Not many companies are populated by all under 20's/all over 50's. Many companies are white and/or male to an unacceptable degree [B6].

No - Would be difficult to monitor, control and prove [B8].

No - Perhaps a good idea but virtually impossible to enforce [B91].

Secondly, the remaining responses which formed the other sub-grouping centred on the need for self-determination by challenging legislation as being either too restrictive, intrusive or bureaucratic. For example:

No - it would be too restrictive for the employer [A2].

No - because the Company's time is being wasted as well as the general public's [A50].

No - I feel that the State should not legislate against personal choice [A127].

No - there is already too much employment legislation [A172].

No - too inflexible [A186].

No - I do not favour further legislation in the field of discrimination. Three "protected species" (women, race, trade unionists) is enough [A189].

No - it is unnecessary for the State to interfere with employers' recruitment and selection decisions. Legislation against sex and race discrimination has had limited success [A218].

No - legislation should be kept to a minimum [A225].

No - I don't believe that legislation would help - merely creates bureaucracy [A241].

The third main grouping of respondents - referred to as 'non-interventionists' - advocated an approach which was hostile to the formation of any measures designed to tackle age discrimination. The sentiments conveyed suggested that age discrimination could be seen as a legitimate practice. Views did, however, range from 'occasionally acceptable' through to 'normally acceptable'. Non-interventionists comprised 30.7% (n=42) of the total 'no/not sure' responses. Illustrations of responses to the question of whether or not we need anti ageist legislation included:

No - certain jobs require certain age groups [A52].

No - certain types of work may be particularly demanding in one area. If the employer has prior knowledge of exactly what the job requires, it is a waste of the employer's time and resources to encourage applications from the population in which they are not interested. It is also a waste of the applicants time! [A66].

No - organisations should have freedom in their recruitment [A91].

No - I do not. I believe employers should be able to make a selection based upon sound criteria, one of which may be age. Different groups may claim age discrimination at different ages - school leavers, married women with young families, people approaching retirement. There are disadvantages and advantages at all ages - it just isn't sensible to legislate on such broad issues [A100].

No - there are occasions when it is necessary to specify an age limit for certain posts [A116].

Definitely not - the issue of "age discrimination" is over emphasised, and such legislation would introduce yet another stupid, restrictive and ineffective burden on employers. The use of age limits (lower or upper) in job advertisements is age discrimination. But, in many (perhaps most) cases it is very necessary and justified [A140].

No - some positions require a younger person [A145].

No - sometimes necessary to limit the number of applicants for a job. Especially if it is for an office junior or senior management position [A148].

No - sometimes necessary to put age limits on specific jobs as it is not feasible for someone of a certain age to have the qualifications or experience required [A151].

No - sometimes age limits are necessary and justifiable, saving everyone's time and resources [A161].

No - sometimes it is justifiable and reasonable [A181].

No - in certain instances it may be necessary or desirable to specify age limits, i.e. when a balance has to be struck between age and value for money [A190].

No - there are occasions where it is necessary [A205].

No - there are some considerations regarding age - it saves time all round [A229].

No - Age discrimination is synonymous with conduct/maturity/ability [B59].

No - Some age groups are particularly suited to certain kinds of work [B63].

No - Don't see it as a problem! Legislation, therefore, a little over the top [B72].

Like the earlier 'legislation inappropriate' group, the final category of 'pro-other measures' respondents were sceptical of the potential effectiveness of anti-ageist legislation. However, unlike the previous grouping, respondents elaborated beyond their reservations regarding legislation and identified other alternative anti-ageist initiatives. This grouping contained the smallest proportion of the 'no/not sure' respondents at 9.5% (n=13). Responses included:

No - I think this would be taking it too far - however, more publicity and education are needed [A29].

Code of practice would suffice [A98].

These may be required in some quarters. However, a true equal opportunities policy would remove all age, sex, race criteria [A128].

No - we have more than enough legislation and it would only drive the problem "underground". It is better to encourage employers to look at the benefits of employing people of all ages and backgrounds [A133].

No - but companies should be made to think harder why they are specifying certain ages. The problem is more attitudinal than legislative [A171].

I would rather do it through understanding and education. You cannot legislate for attitudes or behaviour [A188].

Yes and No - Other means should be used to change employers practices, but legislation could be a last resort [B43].

No - It would be difficult to administer. Educating the public/managers may be a better option [B61].

No - Needs re-education and guidelines to be set up - not necessarily legislation [B80].

No - I don't think we need to enforce legislation - a code of practice is adequate. However, if this not adhered to legislation may be necessary [B87].

From the analysis it is possible to produce a reconstructed version of table 9.1. which presents attitudes toward corrective measures rather than just those concerning legislation (see table 9.2.). In effect, the 'pro-other measures' grouping has been added to the 'yes to legislation' group to form an aggregated 'yes to corrective measures' group. The residual anti-measures group is made up of 'non-interventionists'; the 'no discernible position' and 'legislation inappropriate' groups, for the reasons stated above, are classified as 'unsure'.

Table 9.2 - A Summary of Employers' Attitudes Toward Anti-Ageist Measures

Question	'Yes' % (*n*)	'No' % (*n*)	'Unsure' % (*n*)	'No Reply' % (*n*)	Sample Size
Do you support the introduction of corrective measures aimed at tackling age discrimination in employment?	61.7% (*n*=213)	12.2% (*n*=42)	23.8% (*n*=82)	2.3% (*n*=8)	(*n*=345)

Table 9.2 shows that there is a substantial body of support for anti-ageist position, with almost two thirds of the employers questioned favouring the introduction of corrective measures. Perhaps even more telling is the fact that there are five times as many respondents who are 'pro-measures' than there are who are 'anti' them. This finding offers strong support for hypothesis 16, which states that:

> **The majority of employers support the implementation of measures aimed at combating unfair discrimination on the grounds of age.**

9.3 The Type of Anti-Ageist Strategies Advocated

For our purposes, the permutation of measures available for addressing age discrimination which are explored here are consistent with those discussed within the review of literature (see section 2.7, chapter 2). The only additional measure included is a deliberately radical and controversial one, i.e. financial rewards for non-discrimination.

The data which are discussed in this section have been gathered from scaled responses to question 4 of questionnaire B (see appendix B), which asked respondents (n=97) to rank the potential impact of five measures aimed at combating ageism, namely: legislation, company guidelines and policies, professional codes of practice, re-education initiatives, and financial rewards for non-discrimination. Respondents were also invited to specify and rank a 6th measure of their choice, however, in the event none of them took up this option. A summary of rankings for the whole sample, and according to gender and occupational group, is presented below in table 9.3.

Table 9.3 - Employers' Rankings of the Potential Effectiveness of Various Strategies for Addressing Age Discrimination According to Occupation and Gender

Factor	Overall Ranking	Male Ranking	Female Ranking	Manager Ranking	Personnel Ranking
Age based legislation	1st	3rd	1st	3rd	1st
Company guidelines/policies	3rd	1st	3rd	2nd	2nd
Professional codes of practice	2nd	2nd	2nd	1st	3rd
Re-education initiatives	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th
Financial rewards for non-discrimination	5th	5th	5th	5th	5th

There are a number of interesting aspects to the findings contained in table 9.3. First, what might be regarded as the 'softest' of the measures available rank 4th and 5th respectively. Re-education and rewards are 'softer' insofar as there are no explicit or implicit penalties attached to non-compliance. Legislation, company guidelines and professional codes are all designed, albeit to varying

degrees, to engender conformity through the use, or threat of the use, of punishment i.e. 'negative reinforcement' (Skinner, 1971). The implication is therefore that employers believe that punitive measures whether administered by statute, a professional body or an organisation offer a more effective means of tackling ageism.

Second, the positioning of anti-ageist legislation as the most popular measure is not unexpected . It is consistent with the majority support for legislation reported in the previous section in response to direct questions concerning its possible introduction (see table 9.1). It does, however, represent a departure from the findings of Warr and Pennington's (1993) study of 1,140 personnel practitioners which found that the greater proportion of respondents favoured either voluntary measures or no action (see table 2.7 for further details). The support for legislation also directly challenges the central proposition in hypothesis 17, which states:

> **Of the approaches available for tackling age discrimination the greater proportion of employers favour the development of voluntary measures.**

Indeed, the research findings are the antithesis of this stated position. The evidence clearly points to "the greater proportion of employers favouring" statutory, rather than voluntary measures.

Third, hypothesis 18 posits that:

Formal company policies and professional guidelines are seen by employers as potentially having only a limited impact upon addressing age discrimination within the workplace.

This assertion is not generally supported by the results in table 9.3. The ranking of these measures as 2nd and 3rd most effective is an indication that they are perceived as having at least a 'moderate', rather than 'limited', impact upon age discrimination.

A further aspect of table 9.3. that warrants attention is the differences in the rank order between male and female respondents and between managers and personnel practitioners. In both instances the most marked variance pertains to the importance attached to legislation.

The most likely explanation for the gender differences is perhaps connected to the statistically significant differences found regarding wider attitudes towards age discrimination in general. The earlier analysis of stakeholders shows that women hold substantially less stereotypical views of older and younger workers than their male counterparts (see table 7.6). They also find the range of reasons offered in support of age preferences less acceptable than do male employers (see table 7.7). The strong anti-ageist views held by women may explain why they favour legislation as the most appropriate measure for tackling what they regard to be a significant problem. Moreover, because male respondents are more inclined to agree with particular age stereotypes and find a greater range of

reasons for age preferences acceptable, they are less likely to favour legislation. Other measures such as company guidelines and professional codes have considerably more appeal because they offer greater discretion to indulge, albeit to a limited extent, in age discrimination in instances where it is contiguous with their particular age preferences. In short, although not generally condoning arbitrary ageism, non-statutory measures enable male employers to determine and act upon the 'exceptions' where they deem age to be a legitimate factor - legislation removes this form of autonomy.

The differences between general/line managers and personnel practitioners regarding legislation is corroborated by the significant occupational differences reported in response to a direct question about the appropriateness of anti-ageist legislation (see table 7.5, chapter 7). Nevertheless, it is still not easy to explain this finding. In terms of their general attitudes towards older and younger workers there are no significant differences between the two occupational groups. Therefore, in this instance we have the two groupings characterising the 'problem' in the same way, but disagreeing over best 'solution'.

The most plausible explanation perhaps relates to power and agency. If anti-ageist legislation was introduced it would be personnel practitioners who, as with other anti-discriminatory law, would be charged with the responsibility of interpreting, implementing and policing the legislation. Hence, the personnel role could - according

to 'social theories of power' (see for example: French and Raven, 1951; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Brass, 1984; Pfeffer, 1981) - be described as having 'expert power' and 'opportunity power', while the line manager is relegated to a position of relative powerlessness.

If instead, and as advocated by managers, voluntary measures were introduced then it is line managers who form the locus of power; they possess 'positional' authority and 'opportunity' power (French and Raven, 1951). In this second scenario, the personnel staff become, to coin a phrase, 'toothless'. Hence, the contrasting opinions between the aforementioned groups of organisational actors, regarding anti-ageist measures, may primarily be a function of vested interests rather than a dispassionate and distal assessment of potential effectiveness. An alternative, although not necessarily competing, explanation may be that personnel/HR practitioners tend to take a 'principled view' while managers tend to adopt a more 'pragmatic view'.

9.4. The Areas of Employment Requiring Corrective Action

Insights into the kind of employment decisions needing remedial attention are derived from data produced by question 5 of questionnaire B. Using a three-point scale (i.e. always, sometimes or never) and responding to eight different areas of employment-related decision making, respondents were asked to indicate how legitimate they felt it was to consider age as a factor in each instance. The frequency distributions of employers' attitudes (n=97) toward age

discrimination in relation to the eight areas of employment are contained below in table 9.4.

Table 9.4 - Distribution of Employers' Attitudes Toward the Legitimacy of using Age as a Factor when Making Various Employment-Related Decisions

Employment Area	always acceptable	sometimes acceptable	never acceptable
Advertising job vacancies	9.5%	50.5%	40.0%
Shortlisting/interviewing	5.4%	45.2%	49.5%
Remuneration and pay increases	3.2%	23.4%	73.4%
Opportunities for training and development	5.3%	40.4%	54.3%
Retirement and redundancy issues	31.5%	57.6%	10.9%
Assessing physical ability or medical fitness to do a job	22.3%	56.4%	21.3%
Manpower planning	18.7%	56.0%	25.3%
Pension scheme eligibility	40.2%	41.3%	18.5%

The aspect of table 9.4. which particularly stands out is the overwhelming unacceptability of considering age when making decisions about remuneration and pay increases (i.e. never acceptable = 73.4%). The other striking feature is the widespread acceptance of the use of age in relation to retirement and redundancy issues (i.e. sometimes/always acceptable = 90.1%) and pension scheme eligibility (sometimes/always = 81.5%).

The results of a more extensive analysis are presented overleaf in table 9.5. In this table mean scores are used as a basis for producing

a ranking of items and undertaking ANOVA comparisons according to gender and occupational group.

Table 9.5 - Ranking and ANOVA Comparison of Employers' Attitudes Toward the Acceptability of Various Age-Related Employment Decisions According to Occupation and Gender

Employment Area	Overall Mean (rank)	Male Mean[a] (rank)	Female Mean[b] (rank)	ANOVA Prob. (a & b)	Manager Mean[c] (rank)	Personnel Mean[d] (rank)	ANOVA Prob. (c & d)
Advertising job vacancies	2.31 (5)	2.32 (5)	2.29 (5)	a>b	2.17 (5)	2.45 (5)	c<d*
Shortlisting and interviewing	2.44 (6)	2.42 (6)	2.46 (6)	a<b	2.33 (6)	2.56 (6)	c<d
Remuneration and pay increases	2.70 (8)	2.66 (8)	2.74 (8)	a<b	2.58 (8)	2.83 (8)	c<d*
Opportunities for training and development	2.49 (7)	2.43 (7)	2.54 (7)	a<b	2.38 (7)	2.61 (7)	c<d
Retirement and redundancy issues	1.79 (2)	1.84 (2)	1.76 (1)	a>b	1.72 (1)	1.87 (2)	c<d
Assessing physical ability/ medical fitness to do a job	1.99 (3)	1.95 (3)	2.02 (3)	a<b	1.79 (3)	2.20 (4)	c<d**
Manpower planning	2.07 (4)	2.02 (4)	2.10 (4)	a<b	2.06 (4)	2.07 (3)	c<d
Pension scheme eligibility	1.78 (1)	1.79 (1)	1.78 (2)	a>b	1.77 (2)	1.80 (1)	c<d

Notes: (1) The higher the mean score and ranking the less acceptable/legitimate the use of age as a factor, and: (2) *ANOVA significance level (*=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001).

The overall rankings contained in table 9.5 confirm the main findings of the percentage distribution of responses shown in table 9.4 (i.e. the unacceptability of using age as a criteria for remuneration/pay increases and the acceptability of its use when making redundancy, retirement and pension-related decisions). The results regarding retention decisions (redundancy and retirement)

mirror those found by Thompson (1991) and Warr and Pennington (1993). In both these studies employers identified retirements and retention as the areas where action is least needed (see table 2.7, table 2.8 and section 3.5 for further details). Equally the results support the assertion made in hypothesis 20, that:

> **Retirement and redundancy are seen as the areas of employment decision-making where age-based corrective measures are least required.**

The other hypothesis relating to areas of employment and corrective posits that:

> **The recruitment and selection process is seen as the area of employment decision-making where age-based corrective measures are most required (hypothesis 19).**

This assertion received less emphatic support. Recruitment and selection - in the form of 'advertising job vacancies' and 'shortlisting and interviewing' - were ranked 5th and 6th respectively out of the eight areas requiring attention. 'Training and development' (7th) and 'remuneration and pay increases' (8th) were both classified as areas where age preferences where seen by employers as less acceptable. Therefore, the use of age when recruiting and selecting employees might be more accurately described as an area where corrective measures are 'required', rather than - as suggested by hypothesis 19 - constituting the area where they are 'most required'.

The four demographic groupings presented in table 9.5 exhibited a high degree of homogeneity. In particular, the deviation between rankings never exceeds more than one place for any of the eight items. Furthermore, with no statistically significant results the ANOVA comparison according to gender has not produced any major differences between male and female employees in terms of their perception of the areas requiring action.

The one demographic result which warrants further consideration is the difference between managers and personnel practitioners. Although the rankings are similar for both groupings, the relative intensity of views expressed is clearly dissimilar. Personnel practitioners consistently found the consideration of age in relation to all eight areas of employment decision making less acceptable than did managers. Moreover, in three instances these differences were found to be statistically significant. The implication of this finding is that personnel practitioners have marginally less ageist views than managers, but that these differences extend across the spectrum of employment-related decisions.

9.5 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated, in accordance with hypothesis 16, that the majority of employers support for the introduction of measures aimed at combating age discrimination in employment. Moreover, and in diametric opposition to the assertion made in hypothesis 17, the majority of employers favour the implementation

of anti-ageist legislation rather than the development of voluntary measures.

Although there was majority support for the introduction of legislation differing subsets of views were identified. Women and personnel practitioners exhibited stronger support for statutory measures than did men and managers. In the case of gender this finding was attributed to differences in wider attitudes towards ageism. The most plausible explanation for an occupational difference made a connection between the vested interests of the groups concerned and the degree of power and control afforded by each of the various corrective measures.

Finally, retirement, redundancy and pension-related decisions were identified as the areas of employment where age criteria were seen as most legitimate and where corrective measures were least required. 'Remuneration/pay increases' and 'training and development' were found to be the areas where employers felt ageism was least acceptable and, therefore, where remedial action was most needed.

Chapter 10 - Conclusions

10.1 Introduction

This closing chapter is intended to integrate, and in certain instances extend, the findings and discussion presented in the previous chapters. There are four parts to this concluding chapter. In the following section, the changing nature of ageism in employment is discussed. Then, in the second main section, the various measures available for tackling age discrimination are reassessed and an alternative way of framing remedial action is presented. The third main section, considers the ways in which ageism significantly differs from other forms of workplace discrimination and challenges the dominant conceptualisation of ageism. And, in the final main section, a job contingent theory of age discrimination is developed.

10.2 Age Discrimination: An "ism" in Decline?

The longitudinal analysis of job advertisements (n=21,805) presented in chapter 5 provided strong evidence of an exponential decay in the use of age limits in job advertisements. Equally, the ANOVA comparison of attitudes towards age stereotypes (Chapter 6) and the support for reasons offered for age preferences (Chapter 8) expressed by the 1990 and 1995 cohorts completing questionnaire A (n=248) reveals a consistent, and statistically significant, shift of opinion.

The overriding conclusion that can be drawn from the overt analysis of employers' behaviour provided by the job advertisement sample, and the covert analysis of employers' attitudes provided by the questionnaire survey, is that age discrimination is declining over time. However, the change is best described as a process of gradual erosion rather than one of dramatic decline.

The gradual and unrelenting shift in workplace attitudes towards ageism is perhaps symptomatic of a wider process of social change towards increasingly more tolerant and liberal attitudes. Moreover, ageism in employment might represent a microcosm of a growing appreciation of diversity in society as a whole. If this were the case we would expect to find evidence of diversity becoming an increasingly prominent and topical issue within organisations.

A source of support for this claim is the recent plethora of management texts which extol the virtues of organisations embracing 'workforce diversity'. In particular, Litvin (1997) has observed that:

> ".....many of the recent editions of undergraduate OB and management textbooks have added new chapters on managing diversity, or else have incorporated material on diversity into various chapters of the text, often through the use of exercises, sidebar 'Diversity Encounters', Diversity Highlights', or 'Spotlights on Diversity' "(p. 198).

The range of texts which have addressed diversity have typically defined it in terms of a collection of demographic differences (including: age, gender, religion, culture, educational background,

physical ability/disability, race and sexual orientation) and it has generally been portrayed as something which needs to be actively managed (see for example: Bateman and Zeithaml, 1993; Hellriegel, et al, 1995; Nelson and Campbell-Quick, 1994; Northcraft and Neale, 1994; Moorhead and Griffin, 1995; Ivancevich and Matteson, 1996). Moorhead and Griffin (1995:519) describe managing diversity as a 'growing managerial challenge'. Similarly, Robbins (1996) explains:

> "The challenge for organizations..... is to make themselves more accommodating to diverse groups of people by addressing their different lifestyles, family needs and work styles. The melting pot assumption is being replaced by one that recognizes and values differences" (p. 15).

Noon and Blyton (1997) have suggested that 'managing diversity' can be seen as involving a shift away from a collective focus to an individual one. As a consequence, they assert that unfair discrimination may "no longer be acknowledged as the common experience of disadvantaged groups of people, but the private experience of isolated individuals" (p. 186). The link between the individualisation of the experience of discrimination and diversity initiatives which Noon and Blyton identify may go some way to explaining why 'job-specific' reasons (which have an individual focus), rather than 'organisationally- generic' reasons (which have a collective focus), carry favour with employers in terms of their perceived legitimacy. Therefore, in addition to being implicated in the erosion in ageist attitudes and behaviour, the emergence of 'diversity management' may also reflect a fundamental shift in the nature of ageism from a collectivistic to an individualistic position.

When viewed in this manner, the advent of 'workforce diversity' programmes may be construed as having more to do with individualism than liberalism.

If, as is clearly evident, ageism is declining does it constitute a 'real' problem? Does it constitute a significant area of 'workforce diversity' which needs to be managed? If it is a problem, the implication is that it will eventually resolve itself. This is a dangerous and unwarranted assumption for two reasons. First, there is no guarantee that the diminution of age discrimination will continue unabated until it reaches a point where it totally vanishes. Instead, it may flatten out to a level which contains an intransigent hard core of 'age discriminators'.

Second, even if we accept that an unremitting erosion of age discrimination is taking place, this does not justify complacency. Age discrimination is a significant problem now and is likely to be so for a number of years to come. A tangible illustration of the persistence of ageism can be derived from the age stereotype findings, where the age stereotypical views formed the majority in 4 out of the 17 instances, and accounted for at least 20% of the total responses in a further six of the statements. Similarly, an aggregation of employers' responses to the acceptability of the reasons offered in support of age preferences revealed that the 'acceptables' were actually in the majority (i.e. 51% for 'sometimes/always acceptable' v. 49% for 'never acceptable').

Although, as demonstrated above, age discrimination may be declining there continues to be a substantial body of support among employers for its enactment. A straightforward extrapolation of trends (i.e. the rate of decline) suggests it will be some years before the effect it has upon employees, and prospective employees, could be described as inconsequential. Hence, age discrimination remains a 'real' problem in need of a solution(s).

10.3 Anti-Ageist Measures: Actions and (Re)actions

Here the discussion of views expressed by employers regarding the various measures available for tackling ageism (Chapter 9) is re-assessed and extended in two ways. First, in the following subsection, the nature and distribution of support for particular forms of corrective action is analysed in terms of the existence of competing perspectives.

Second, in the subsequent section, an alternative way of framing remedial action is developed using a model borrowed from the literature on organisational change.

10.3.1. Voluntarism and Regulation: A False Binary Opposition?

The findings of the research into employers' views of corrective measures (see sections 9.2 and 9.3) indicate that the introduction of anti-ageist legislation was by far the most heavily supported initiative, with 58% of all respondents (n= 345) favouring this approach. However, a perplexing feature of the responses offered by employers is the way in which legislation and other corrective

measures were consistently portrayed in an 'either/or way': none of the 345 respondents advocated an integrated approach to addressing ageism in employment. In short, statutory and voluntary measures were depicted as being mutually exclusive.

This false binary opposition - which could equally be described as a 'dualism' (Reed, 1997) or an illustration of 'black and white logic' (Chia, 1996) - seems to rely implicitly upon polarising the constructs of compliance and commitment. This is evident in the short discursive accounts provided by respondents. Those who favoured legislation argued that many employers would not cease discriminating on the basis of age unless they were forced too. As one pro-legislation respondent put it: "employers are too slow to change their behaviour without a legal impetus to do so" [B45]. And, another commented: "If ageism is made unlawful employers would not dare to say to a job candidate 'sorry your are a bit too old' " [B95].

Those who favoured voluntary measures questioned the extent to which the compliance route of legislation was a viable strategy for reducing ageism. Many respondents suggested that employers would merely develop more subtle and sophisticated mechanisms for discriminating. This position was succinctly summarised by a respondent who suggested that legislation "would only drive the problem underground" [A133]. The case for voluntary measures rested on the view that "attitudes are seldom changed by legislation" [A126] and that commitment is achieved "through understanding and education" [A188].

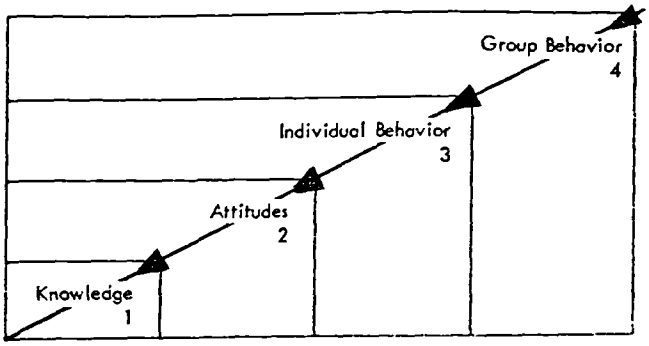
The view that statutory intervention (as a compliance eliciting device) and voluntary measures (as a source of commitment) are mutually exclusive is highly questionable. Not least because, in other realms of discrimination, such as gender and race, they go hand-in-hand (i.e. legislation on race and sex discrimination, company equal opportunities policies, company-based gender and racial awareness programmes, and so on). In the following section a model which highlights the feasibility and benefits of concurrently pursuing statutory and voluntary anti-ageist initiatives is outlined.

10.3.2. Tackling Ageism: An Alternative Way Forward

Hersey and Blanchard (1988) have proposed a model of organisational change which consists of four levels: knowledge changes, attitudinal changes, individual behaviour changes and group or organisational performance changes. Using these levels they have identified two distinct patterns of change: a directive change cycle and a participative change cycle.

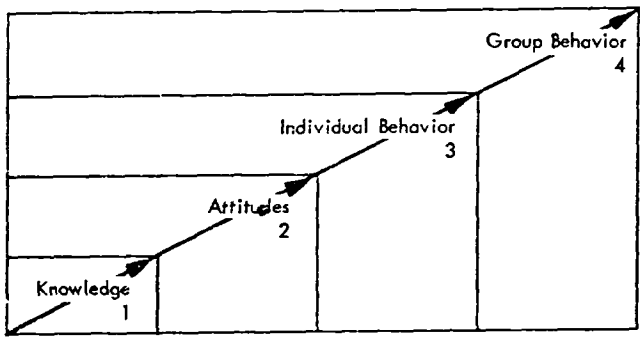
The directive change cycle (see figure 10.1 below), according to Hersey and Blanchard, "begins by change being imposed on the total organisation by some external force, such as higher management, the community, new laws. This will tend to affect the interaction network system at the individual level. The new contacts and modes of behaviour create new knowledge, which tends to develop predispositions toward or against the change" (1988:273-274).

Figure 10.1 - The Directive Change Cycle



The participative change cycle works in the opposite direction (see figure 10.2 below). The starting point for change in this instance is new knowledge which drives a change of attitude which in turn manifests itself in revised individual and group behaviour.

Figure 10.2 - The Participative Change Cycle



This model has implications for tackling ageism. The mechanics of instigating organisational change are not that dissimilar from those which apply to a social process of change such as reducing ageism. Indeed, the four levels of change (i.e. knowledge, attitudes,

individual and group behaviour) are all clearly central to the issue of age discrimination. Furthermore, the introduction of anti-ageist legislation can be equated to a process of directive change (figure 10.1) while voluntary measures can be described as more or less equivalent to the participative change cycle (figure 10.2).

The introduction of legislation, as a directive approach, inevitably elicits compliance - employers are forced to modify their collective behaviour (i.e. box 4 on figure 10.1) and their individual behaviour (box 3). However, as suggested above in respondents' accounts of the limitations of legislation, this kind of initiative is unlikely to change attitudes (box 2). Therefore, at best we have compliance and at worst we have a subversive form of non-compliance if employers choose to continue to discriminate, but do so in more sophisticated and subtle ways. This interpretation of the prospects for legislation is decidedly pessimistic and one-sided in two ways.

First, not everyone who discriminates on the basis of age does so in a deliberate and premeditated way. Equally, not all ageist employers are likely to hold strong views, some will have a moderate or weak inclination to discriminate. In such cases legislation may encourage employers to reflect upon and re-evaluate their reasons for discriminating and this in turn may lead to the abandonment of an ageist stance. In other words, legislation might act as a catalyst for changing the attitudes (box 2) and knowledge (box 1) of ageist employers whose views are not deeply ingrained.

Second, a period of enforced compliance (i.e. legislation) may in itself lead to a gradual shift of attitudes. For example, employers who hold strong stereotypical views about either older or younger workers may be forced to modify their views when through increased exposure to the particular age group in the workplace highlights the fallibility of overgeneralising. Certainly, the findings of research into racism and sexism show that discrimination in organisations is reduced by exposure (Noe, 1988; Powell, 1988). As Morrison and Von Glinow point out: "Working alongside a woman or a minority group member may be the key to quelling the discriminatory tastes of white men" (1990:204). If the same is true of exposure to older and/or younger workers an initial period of compliant behaviour resulting from adhering to legislation (i.e. boxes 3 and 4 of figure 10.1) may well give way to a change of attitudes (box 2) and, as a direct consequence, new knowledge (box 1) is likely to displace stereotypical misconceptions (e.g. "not all older workers are change resistant after all!").

As has been demonstrated above, the case for legislation is a convincing one. Moreover, given the potential of legislation, as a process of directive change, to penetrate beyond boxes 3 and 4 (i.e. the domain of regulation) and into boxes 1 and 2 (i.e. the domain of voluntarism), the separation of compliance and commitment becomes untenable. Legislation (via the directive change cycle) and voluntary measures (via the participative change cycle) should be seen as complimentary rather than competing mechanisms for addressing ageism. Indeed, they can actually be seen as synergistic insofar as a

change in ageist attitudes (box 2) and behaviour (box 3) can actually be simultaneously attacked from both directions (e.g. a combination of re-education and increased exposure).

10.4 Ageism: An Untypical Form of Discrimination

Having addressed the prevalence and continuity of ageism (i.e. aspects of 'practice'), and the scope for corrective measures (i.e. aspects of 'policy'), we now turn attention to the underlying characteristics and latent constructs which inform ageism in the workplace (i.e. aspects of 'theory').

In an earlier section (see section 5.2.2), respondents (n=97) were invited to compare ageism with sexism and racism and comment upon their relative significance. The analysis of responses showed that ageism was generally seen as being more prevalent than discrimination on the grounds of sex or race, but less intense. The perception of 'intensity' revolved around the notion that, unlike racism and sexism which are experienced throughout one's life, ageism is dynamic. We move in and out of disadvantaged age groups during the course of our working lives. Ironically, because an individual shifts between advantaged and disadvantaged groups - and the fact that it affects most people at some point in their lives - gives this particular form of discrimination an air of legitimacy. After all, what could be fairer than more or less everyone having a turn at being disadvantaged for a period of time? As one pro-ageism respondent put it: "it's a case of swings and roundabouts." The transient nature of ageism has implications for the way in which we

conceptualise the 'discriminators' and the 'discriminated' as stakeholders in ageism.

10.4.1. The Role and Status of Stakeholders

The dominant view of ageism in general - and within the work context in particular - is that it is something which younger people do to older people (see for example: Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1997; Bytheway, 1995; Naylor, 1990; Taylor and Walker, 1994; Thompson, 1991; Warr and Pennington, 1993). The research presented in this thesis challenges this conventional assumption about age discrimination as primarily operating to the detriment of older workers. For example, the findings regarding the age stereotypes held by employers demonstrate that the most popular images are those which project positive views of older workers (e.g. better interpersonal skills, more stable and loyal). Furthermore, the application of factor analysis revealed clusters of positive and negative groupings of stereotypes about both older and younger workers. It is therefore, a gross over simplification to present older workers as the major group of disadvantaged stakeholders in age discrimination.

Equally, the notion that it is younger workers (as employers) who are doing the discriminating is not supported by the research findings. Employers' age was not found to have any significant bearing upon the propensity to discriminate on the grounds of age. Instead, the general demographic profile of the employer most likely to

discriminate on the grounds of age would be: a male, working in a 'professional/technical' discipline and located in the private sector.

The major implication of the findings regarding stakeholders is that the status of 'discriminators' and 'discriminated' are not as clearly delineated as the extant literature on ageism would have us believe. Both older and younger workers are significantly affected by the ageist behaviour of both older and younger employers. This creates a complicated network of dependency insofar as the boundaries between advantaged and disadvantaged groups become blurred and the purveyors of ageism are also in other circumstances its recipients.

10.4.2. Beyond a Social Comparison Theory of Ageism

The rather complex pattern of stakeholder relationships outlined above brings into question the appropriateness of the traditional conceptualisation of discrimination in two ways. First, the typical schism between a privileged group of power holders and a marginalised and disadvantaged group observed in most forms of discrimination (i.e. whites v. blacks, men v. women, able bodied v. people with disabilities, and so on) is absent with ageism. Second, social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests discrimination arises in situations where the discriminator casts the person(s) being discriminated against as a member of a different group to his/her group. Therefore, this conception of discrimination relies upon an immutable difference between the 'discriminator' and the 'discriminatee' as the focal point of the prejudice. Once again, this

'own group/different group' perspective does not fit with the actuality of ageism, i.e. an older manager is just as likely to discriminate against older workers as a younger manager and vice versa.

Other mainstream theories of discrimination also fail to capture adequately the essence of ageism. For example, 'intergroup theory' (Alderfer, 1986; Thomas and Alderfer, 1989) suggests that discrimination in organisations arises out of the interplay between one's 'identity group' (based on race, gender, age, etc.) and one's 'organisation group' (based on common work tasks, work experiences and position in the hierarchy). Membership of certain groups which tend to occupy lower level positions in the hierarchy results in limited access to resources and fewer opportunities. In effect, we find that 'intergroup theory' relies upon the same central tenet as social comparison theory: an 'own group/different group' separation of privileged (identity) groups and marginalised (identity) groups. Equally, economic explanations of discrimination - such as 'human capital' theories (Blau and Ferber, 1987; Thurow, 1967), 'labour substitution' theories (Becker, 1957) and 'secondary labour market' theories (Osajima, 1988) - are based upon the premise of a group of privileged discriminators and an entirely separate group who are marginalised and discriminated against.

The problem with contemporary theories of discrimination is not just to do with their heavy reliance upon the existence of a discernible imbalance of power between groups, it is also the arbitrariness and inflexibility of their general application which does not seem to

square with the actuality of age discrimination. In addition to the difficulties encountered when attempting to disentangle the stakeholders, ageism also seems to be selectively applied, i.e. age discriminators do not appear to consistently discriminate. This suggests that there is a situational dimension to their behaviour. Therefore, in order to provide a meaningful explanation of age discrimination in employment we have to move towards embracing a contingency model of discrimination.

10.5 Rethinking Ageism: Towards a Job Contingent Theory

If ageism in employment is contingent, what is it contingent upon? The various findings reported in this thesis point to ageism being dependent on the nature of the job which an employee holds or is applying for.

There are three main parts to this section. In the following two subsections, support for the assertion that ageism is job-related is explored; and, in the final subsection, a contingent model of ageism is presented.

10.5.1. Reasons for Ageism: Generic and Specific Legitimations

The findings regarding reasons for age preferences (see chapter 8) produced a high degree of triangulation between the attitudinal survey data (n=248) and the discursive accounts (n=97) regarding the existence of a pattern formed around a cluster of job-related reasons for age discrimination and a cluster of wider factors (labelled as 'organisationally-generic' reasons). The survey findings showed

that respondents consistently favoured 'job-specific reasons' (namely: genuine occupational qualifications, technical constraints, job content factors, individual abilities and strengths sought) as being the more acceptable reasons for age preferences than 'organisationally-generic' ones (i.e. age balance, company policy, succession planning and financial considerations).

Equally, 85% of respondents who provided short written responses to an open question about the justification for age discrimination cited 'job-specific' reasons. The fact that employers condone the 'job-specific' enactment of age preferences - but do not generally believe the broad and arbitrary use of age criteria to be legitimate (i.e. 'organisationally-generic' reasons) - adds weight to the view that a selective contingent form of ageism, based upon specific job-related factors, is in operation.

10.5.2. Age Stereotypes: 'Experience/Maturity' and 'Physical Ability'

The factor analysis of age stereotypes (see section 6.3.2., Chapter 6) produced two factors which had particularly high explanatory power. First, a 'pro-older workers/anti-younger workers' factor was identified which accentuated older workers' stability, maturity and experience. Second, a 'pro-younger workers/anti-older workers' factor which centred upon the physical deterioration of older workers was derived.

Further corroboration for existence of these two latent variables was provided by the qualitative data generated in response to open

questions about ageism; a high proportion of the total respondents (n=97) made a positive connection between 'older workers and experience/maturity' and 'younger workers and physically demanding work.'

These findings offer clear support for the view that age discrimination is job contingent. Given that many of the employers who advocated age discrimination contemporaneously hold positive images of older and younger workers, the basis for operationalising an age preference is about matching the view held about a particular age group (i.e. 'experience/maturity' or 'physical ability') to the perceived requirements of the job.

10.5.3. Connecting Stereotypes and Reasons: A 'Lack of Fit' Conceptualisation of Ageism

Heilman (1983) has sought to explain sex bias in work settings through the development of a model in which she posits a 'lack of fit' between the perceptions held of the characteristics of women and particular jobs. Two fundamental elements lie at the core of the model: sex stereotypes and the sex-typing of jobs. *Sex stereotyping* involves ascribing attributes to an individual or group based upon generalisations about gender, while the "*sex-typing of jobs* is based upon the perceived content of the job and the sex-related attributes linked with it" (Heilman, 1983:277). As Heilman goes on to point out:

> "There have always been some positions and occupations that are considered female in sex-type: librarian, nurse, secretary and elementary school teacher, to name a few. By and large,

> such jobs are believed to require the skills and talents that society attributes to women - nurture, social sensitivity and service. Occupations of higher status, however, apparently are the province of men. They not only have fewer women in their ranks but also are thought to require an achievement-oriented aggressiveness that rarely is associated with women" (p. 277).

The 'lack of fit' model draws on a process of cognitive dissonance, and according to Heilman (1983:280), "it asserts that rational information processing, not some irrational imperative, underlies occupational sex bias". Expectations about how successful or unsuccessful an individual will be at a particular job are determined by an assessment of the degree of congruity, or fit, between the individual's attributes (based upon sex stereotypes) and the perceived job requirements (based upon the sex-typing of the job); the better the fit the greater the expectation of success. Inevitably, instances where there is a distinct 'lack of fit' are the ones which offer the greatest potential for discrimination to arise.

The 'lack of fit' model appears to be highly applicable to ageism. In addition to clear evidence of 'age stereotypes' found in the present study, the data on 'reasons for age preferences' also suggests that 'age-typed jobs' exist. In other words some jobs can be classified as 'older jobs' while others can be seen as 'younger jobs'. Hence, employers are likely to discriminate in favour of older workers in instances where a particular job requires stability, loyalty and maturity on the basis of a good fit between the nature of the job and their stereotypical views of older workers (i.e. the pro-older worker factor derived from the factor analysis). By contrast, older workers

are likely to be disadvantaged and discriminated against in instances where there is a 'lack of fit' between the job and the employers' perception of older workers (i.e. where the task is physically demanding). The same 'good fit/poor fit' process of assessment and evaluation is equally applicable in the case of younger workers.

This model has considerable explanatory power. It resonates with the job contingent findings of the research into age stereotypes and reasons for ageism outlined in the two previous subsections. Moreover, it offers a highly plausible connection between these two areas of investigation insofar as the reasons offered for age preferences arise out of the age-typing of jobs (via GOQ's, technical constraints, etc.) and they provide the conduit by which age stereotypes are mapped onto a particular job.

The model also articulates why many employers simultaneously hold, and act in accordance with, positive and negative images of both older and younger workers. Furthermore, it helps to explain why employers who discriminate on the basis of age appear to do so on a selective basis.

Although the 'lack of fit' model may accurately describe the nature of age discrimination in the workplace it does nothing to legitimise it. The use of age stereotypes in employment-related decision-making is still problematic. As Heilman eloquently puts it:

> "Stereotyping can be a work-saving, efficient, cognitive enterprise, serving to simplify and organise the complex world we encounter. And, indeed, in many instances it is. Knowing that rocks are hard, for instance and that they do not melt when submerged in water enables us to act upon our environment far more effectively than if we had to test for these qualities every time we chanced upon a rock. The problem is that stereotypes about groups of people often are overgeneralisations and are either inaccurate or do not apply to the individual group member in question" (1983:271).

Instead of looking for a fit between age-typed jobs and age stereotypes, endeavouring to match genuine job requirements with particular abilities seems far more appropriate. For instance, rather than automatically excluding older workers from consideration for a physical demanding job, a test of physical strength or fitness for applicants is likely to be a far more reliable and effective means of getting the best person for the job.

Finally, the most significant aspect of this thesis is that it demonstrates that ageism is not something that 'younger employers' do to 'older workers'. In particular, it has shown that socio-psychological and economic theories of discrimination fall some way short of adequately explaining ageism in employment. The dominant 'own group/different group' perspective is rejected in favour of an organisationally situated explanation which locates ageism within a job-contingent framework of routine social action. In short, this thesis has provided empirical support for Bytheway's, until now untested, assertion that:

> "Ageism is not discrimination by dominant groups in society against one particular minority group; it is much more complex than that" (1995:1).

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RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I am carrying out some research into the use of age limits in job advertisements. I would be grateful if you would assist me by completing the following questionnaire. There are four sections which should only take you about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Thank you.

Section One

Please tick or answer where appropriate (if you prefer not to be identified please leave the name request blank).

Name ..... **Sex:** Male [ ]

Female [ ]

Age:

Under 20 yrs old [ ] 30-40 yrs old [ ] 50-60 yrs old [ ]

20-30 yrs old [ ] 40-50 yrs old [ ] Over 60 yrs old [ ]

Type of Occupation:

Managerial/supervisory [ ] Administrative/clerical [ ]

Professional/technical [ ] Personnel management [ ]

Other please specify .....

Type of Organisation:

Public sector [ ] Private sector [ ]

Size of Organisation:

Under 250 employees [ ] 1001-2000 employees [ ]

251-500 employees [ ] 2001-5000 employees [ ]

501-1000 employees [ ] Over 5000 employees [ ]

Section Two

Listed below are some of the reasons given by employers in support of the use of age limits in job advertisements.

Please respond to all of the statements by ticking only one box in each instance.

Age limits in job advertisements are specified because of.....	**I feel that this reason is acceptable.....**		
Personal Reasons	always	sometimes	never
a) Individual constraints - the type of abilities, energy and strengths sought are more common amongst a certain age group.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b) External constraints - family commitments, marital status and social stability.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
c) Technical constraints - deters applicants who have:			
i. outdated knowledge.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
ii. lack of expertise or technical experience.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Structural Reasons			
a) Succession planning - the need to maintain career progression opportunities within the firm.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b) Age balance - postholder needs to be of a certain age to avoid upsetting the balance in ages of existing employees.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
c) Financial considerations - the likely return on investment and potential length of service is effected by age.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
d) Company policy - the firm has a formal or informal policy in favour of specifying age limits in all job advertisements.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Age limits in job advertisements are specified because of.....	**I feel that this reason is acceptable.....**		
Work Reasons	always	sometimes	never
a) Job content factors - the work is too physically demanding or stressful to be carried by certain age groups.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b) Job requirement - where being within a specific age range can be viewed as an 'genuine occupational qualification', e.g. a Youth Worker or a Fashion Model.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Other Reasons			
a) Information - to provide general information about the possible age of the successful candidate, rather than to purposefully discourage older or younger applicants.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b) Filtering - used as a mechanism for:			
i. restricting the total number of respondents who apply for the vacancy.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
ii. shortlisting and/or sorting when a large number of application forms are returned.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Section Three

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by ticking an appropriate response in each instance.

Statement	**Response**				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Motivation tends to decline with age.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2 Older workers are more stable and loyal to an employer than younger workers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. Job performance is unaffected and unrelated to age.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Statement	Response				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disrgree	Strongly Disagree
4. Flexibility is generally greater amongst younger workers than older workers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Younger workers are less cautious than older workers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. As a worker ages it does not directly impair or improve his/her problem solving and decision making ability.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. There is no difference between older and younger workers in terms of their resistance to change.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8. Older workers lack innovation and creativity.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9. Effective communication and interpersonal skills improve with age.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10. Younger workers are more willing to take risks than older workers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11. Absence levels tend to be higher for older workers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12. Older workers take longer to train than their younger counterparts.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13. Productivity and work output both decline with age.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14. The quality of an indivdual's work improves as she/he becomes older.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15. Younger workers are not as reliable and dependable as older workers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
16. Leadership skills do not improve or decline according to an individual's age.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Statement	Response				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disrgree	Strongly Disagree
17. Older workers make more mistakes at work than their younger counterparts.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Section Four

Please answer the three questions listed below by giving a brief statement of your views on each of the issues.

1. Do you feel that the use of age limits in job advertisements leads to age discrimination? And, why?

2. In the U.S.A. it is illegal to specify age limits in job advertisements. Do you feel that similar legislation should be introduced in this country? Why?

3. Overall, are you in favour of, or opposed to, age being used as a criterion in the recruitment process? Why?

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided.

AGE DISCRIMINATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I would be grateful if you could assist me by completing this short questionnaire. Please tick and/or comment as appropriate.

Personal Details

Sex: [ ] Male [ ] Female Age: .....

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1. **Do you think age discrimination in employment is justifiable?** (please tick one box only)

   [ ] Always [ ] Often [ ] Sometimes [ ] Rarely [ ] Never

   Why? .....
   .....
   .....

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2. **Compared to racial and sexual discrimination do you feel that age prejudice is:**

   a) far more of a problem [ ]
   b) slightly more of a problem [ ]
   c) about the same [ ]
   d) slightly less of a problem [ ]
   e) far less of a problem [ ]

   Please explain why? .....
   .....
   .....

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3. **In the U.K. racism and sexism are unlawful, should similar legislation be introduced to address ageism?**

   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   Why? .....
   .....
   .....

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4. **Please rank the following factors in terms of their potential impact as measures for combatting age discrimination** (note: 1st = most significant, 2nd = second most significant, and so on through to the least significant).

Factor	Ranking
a) age based legislation	.....
b) company guidelines and policies	.....
c) professional codes of practice	.....
d) re-education initiatives	.....
e) financial rewards for non-discrimination	.....
f) other please specify.....	.....

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5. How legitimate is it to consider age as a factor when making employment decisions in the following circumstances?
(please tick only one of the three boxes in each instance)

	always acceptable	sometimes acceptable	never acceptable
a) advertising job vacancies	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b) shortlisting/interviewing	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
c) remuneration and pay increases	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
d) opportunities for training and development	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
e) retirement and redundancy issues	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
f) assessing physical ability or medical fitness to do a job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
g) manpower planning	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
h) pension scheme eligibility	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

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6. Using a scale of 1 to 10 please rate how important you feel it would be to include the following provisions, if age legislation were to be introduced in this country.
(note: 1 = unimportant, upto 10 = extremely important/essential).

Provision	Score
a) Exceptions where age preference is permissible.	___
b) Steps to encourage positive action.	___
c) Penalties for non-compliance.	___
d) Granting individuals the right to take age discrimination claims to an Industrial Tribunal	___
e) Enforcement by a regulating body (e.g. Equal Opportunities Commission or similar)	___
f) Other please specify	___

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.